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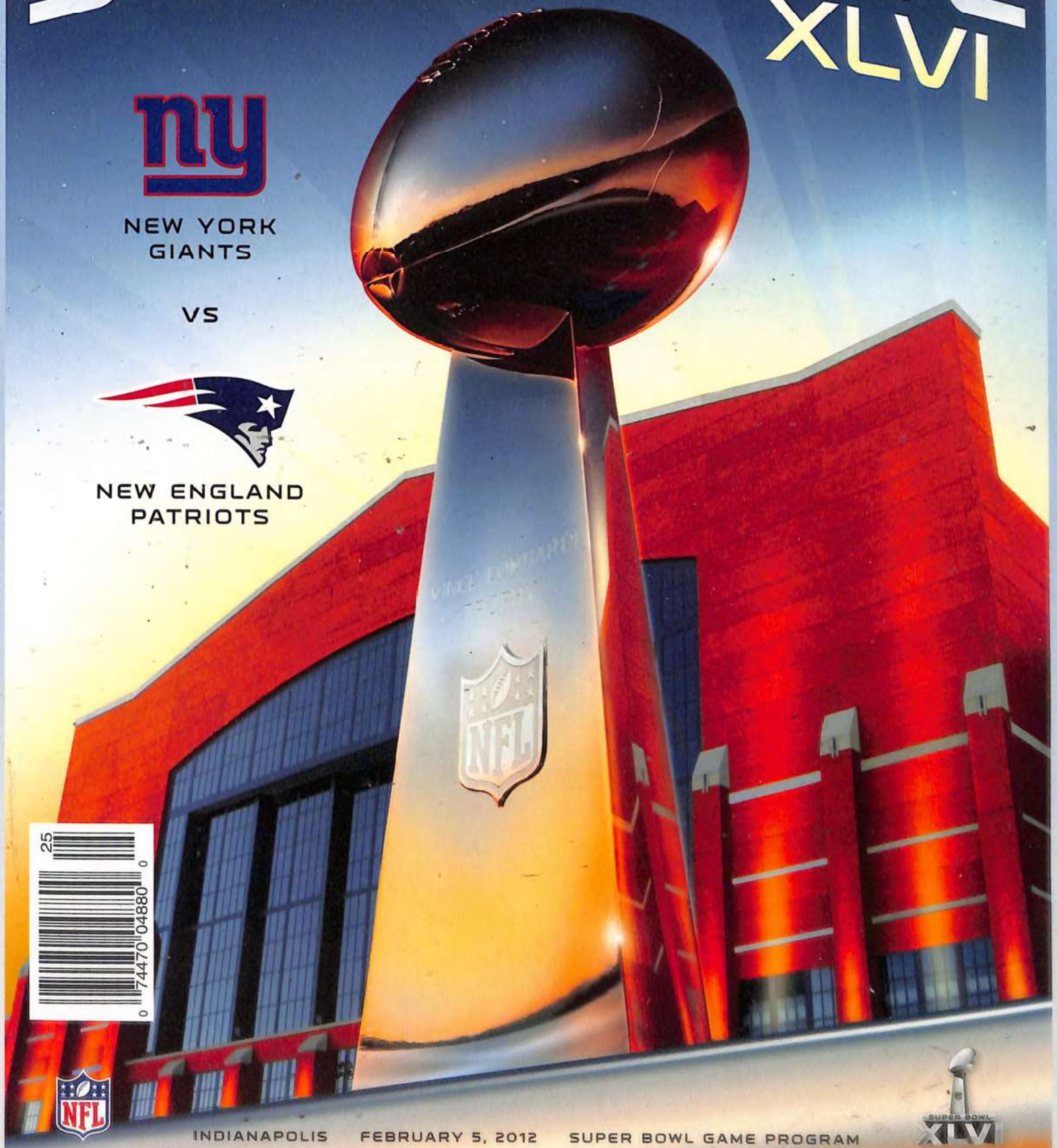

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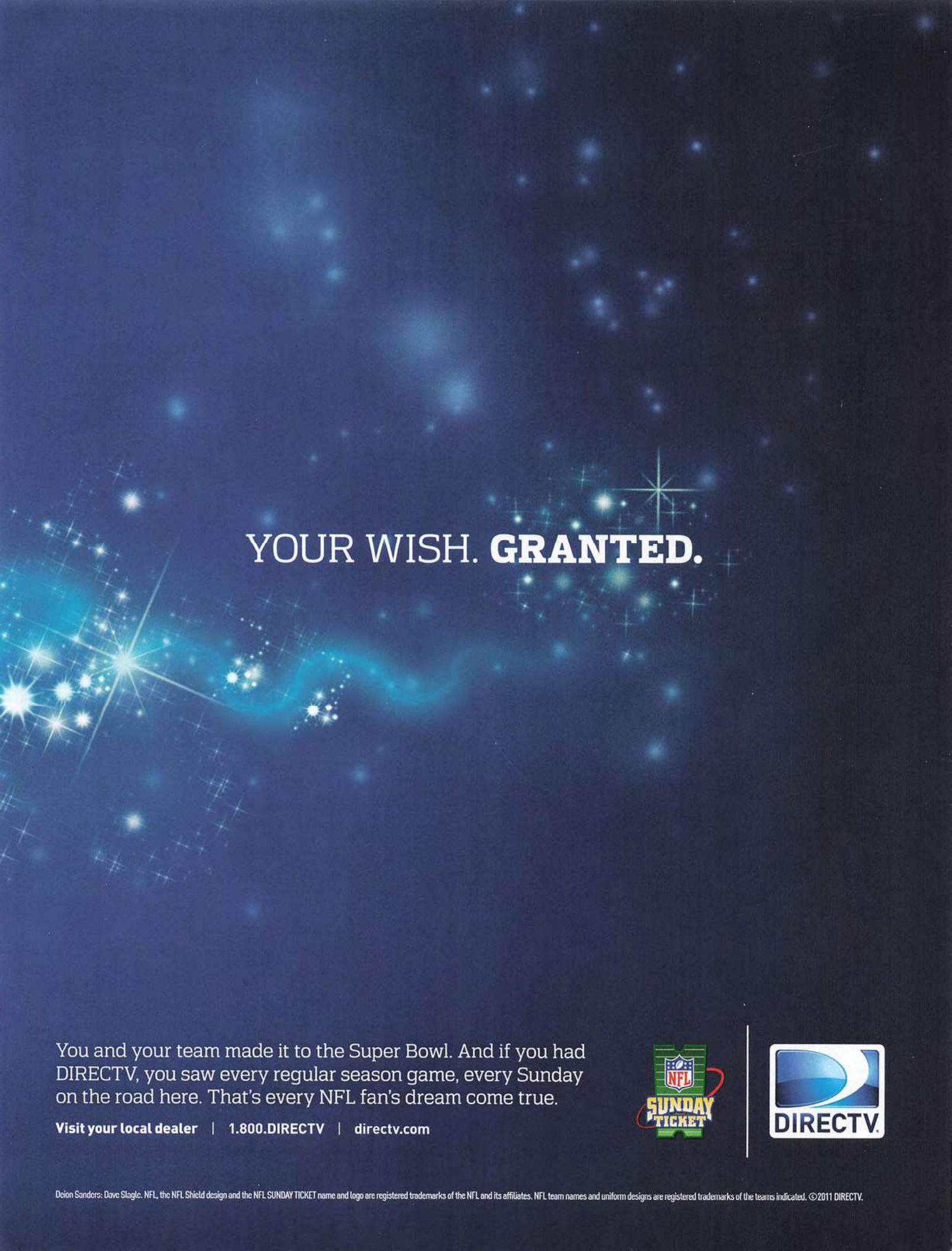
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SUPER BOWL XLVI

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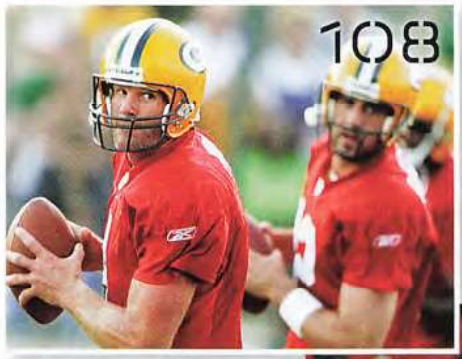

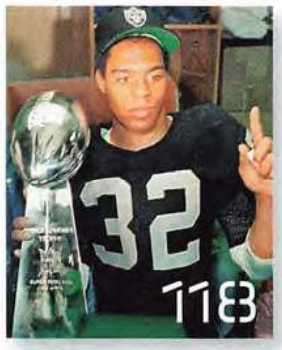

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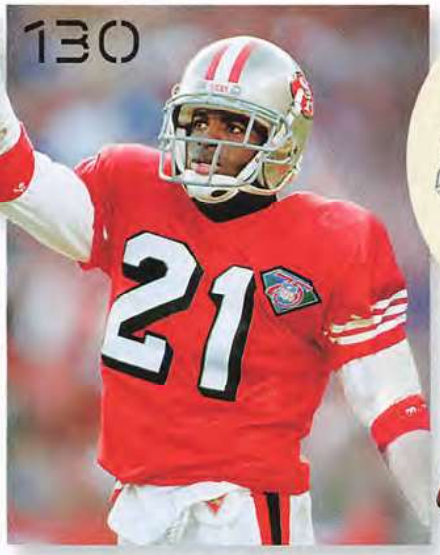

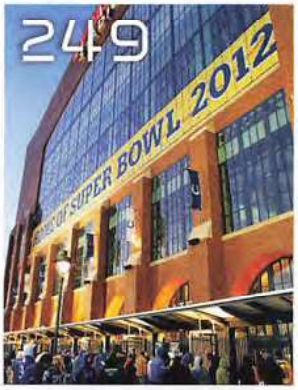

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Super Bowl XLVI Game Program
Lucas Oil Stadium
February 5, 2012

Published for the NFL by
H.O. ZIMMAN, INC.

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Printed in the USA by Quad/Graphics

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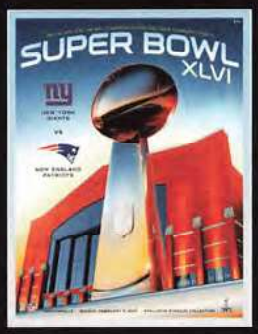

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Lucas Oil Stadium Seating Chart

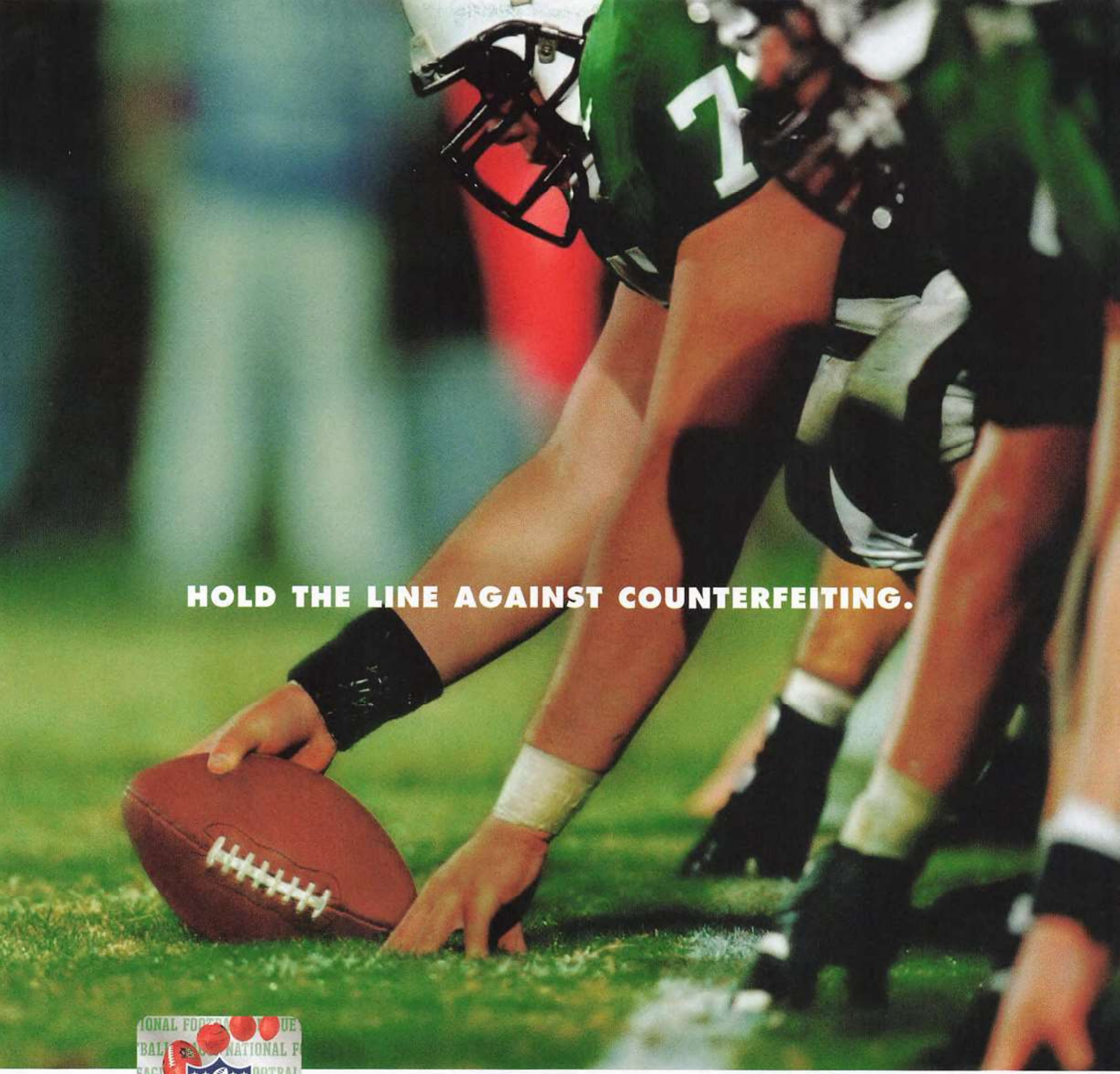
Fan Code of Conduct

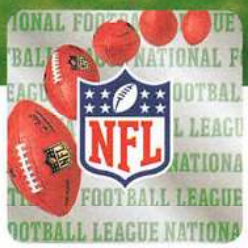
The NFL is committed to creating a safe, comfortable, and enjoyable experience for all fans. As such, guests are required to refrain from the following:

- Behavior that is unruly, disruptive, or illegal in nature;
- Intoxication or other signs of alcohol impairment that results in irresponsible behavior;
- Foul or abusive language or obscene gestures;
- Interference with the progress of the game (including throwing objects on the field);
- Failing to follow instruction of stadium personnel;
- Verbal or physical harassment of opposing team fans.

Guests who are subjected to unruly fans, or witness violations of the Super Bowl Code of Conduct, can text the issue and your location to 69900.

Fans may also visit one of the Guest Services/ Information Booths at any point during the Super Bowl. NFL guest services staff will be on standby, ready to assist.





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FROM THE COMMISSIONER

On behalf of all of us in the National Football League, welcome to Indianapolis for Super Bowl XLVI.

It is always exciting when the Super Bowl comes to a city for the first time, and Indianapolis is a splendid addition to the roster of cities that have hosted the greatest sporting event in America. We are grateful to Colts owner Jim Irsay and the Super Bowl XLVI Host Committee for their hospitality and the pride with which they have prepared not only a Super Sunday but a memorable week of engaging activities. We are proud to showcase Lucas Oil Stadium, truly a spectacular venue for the Super Bowl.

Engaging fans is the NFL's mission not only during Super Bowl week and not only during the season, but all year long. In fact, Lucas Oil Stadium will be bustling again a few weeks from now when it plays host to the annual NFL Combine, featuring the NFL's next group of incoming players.

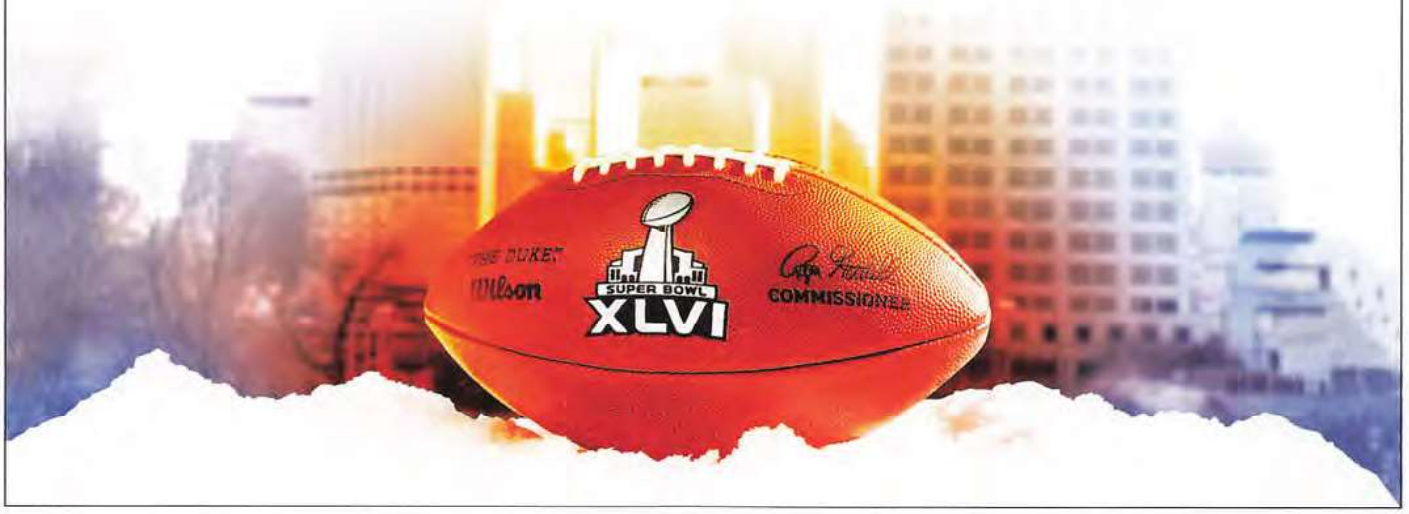
As for NFL stars of the present, the 2011 season saw yet another influx of outstanding talent, as players like Cam Newton, Andy Dalton, and Von Miller took their place alongside decorated veterans such as Tom Brady, Maurice Jones-Drew, and DeMarcus Ware. And as a reminder that football is the ultimate team sport, the always unpredictable NFL season saw perennial playoff contenders in epic competition with young, up-and-coming teams that rejuvenated their fans with playoff runs of their own.

The 2011 season gave us amazing fourth-quarter comebacks, record-breaking performances, and remarkable moments. Not only did fans turn out in great numbers to see the action live, but TV audiences for NFL games this season were again at an all-time high. Fans were able to enjoy NFL action in more ways, in more places, and more often than ever before. We are so pleased to be able to provide the world-class football that keeps you coming back for more.

All which brings us back to the Super Bowl. As fans gather around the world to watch what is America's greatest sporting event, we want to thank all of you for your interest in the game. Rest assured, we will continue to find ways to make NFL football a better experience for fans and players alike.

Enjoy Super Bowl XLVI!

Roger Goodell, *NFL Commissioner*



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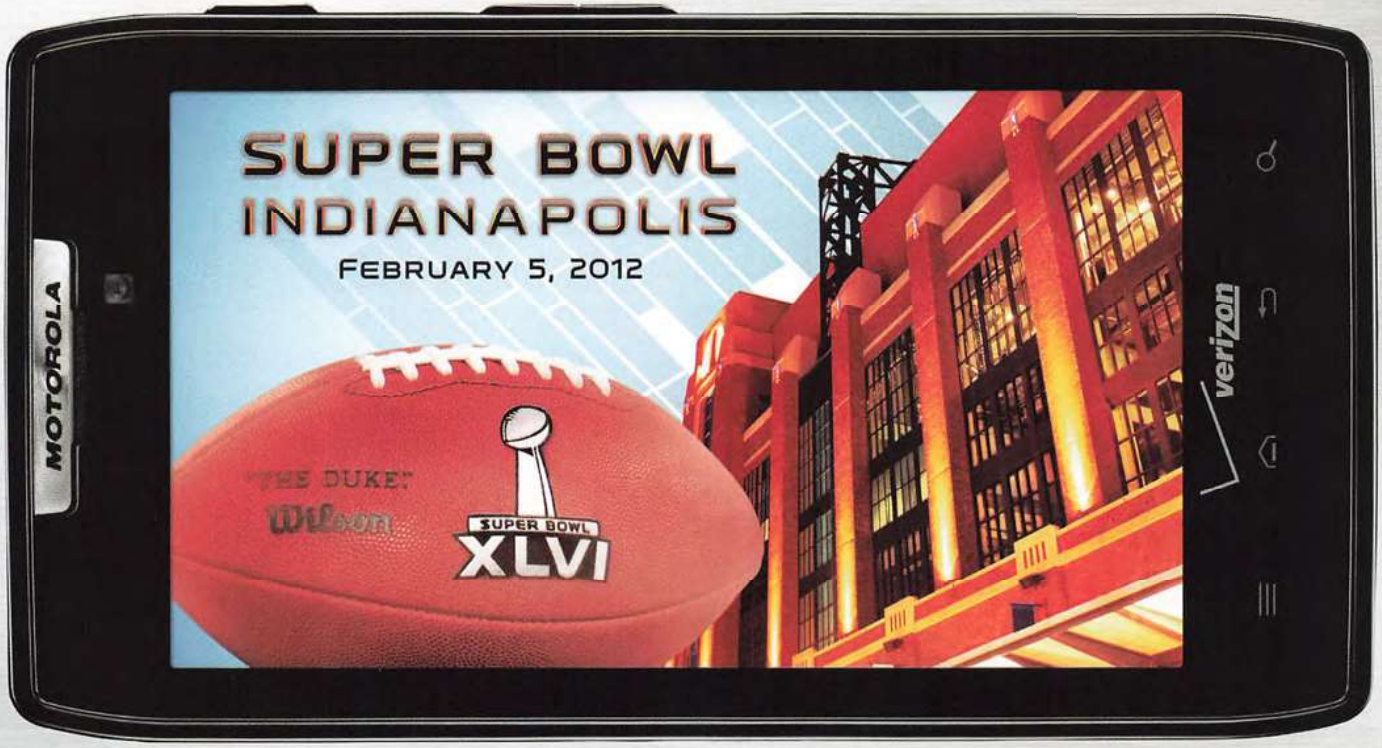

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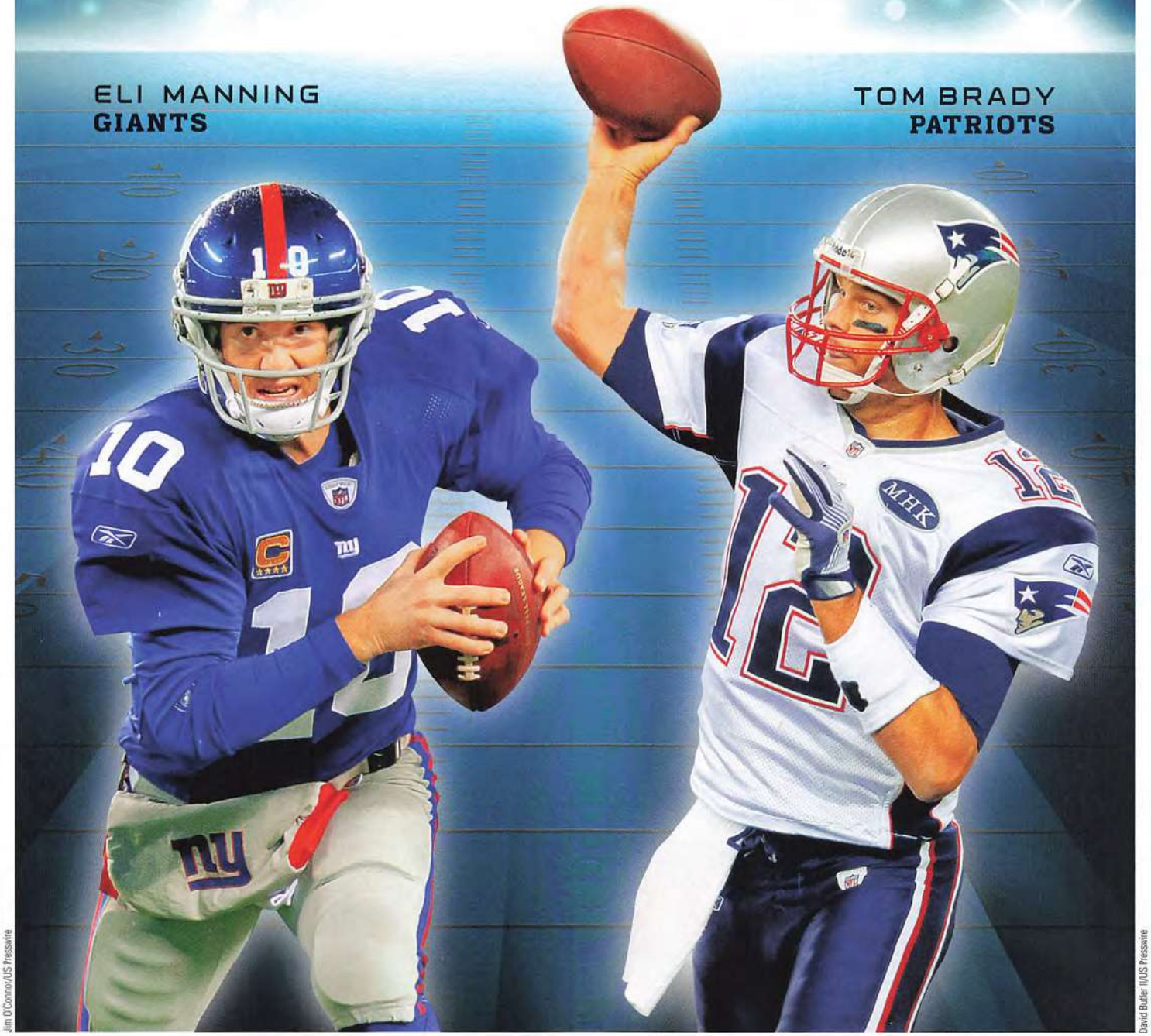

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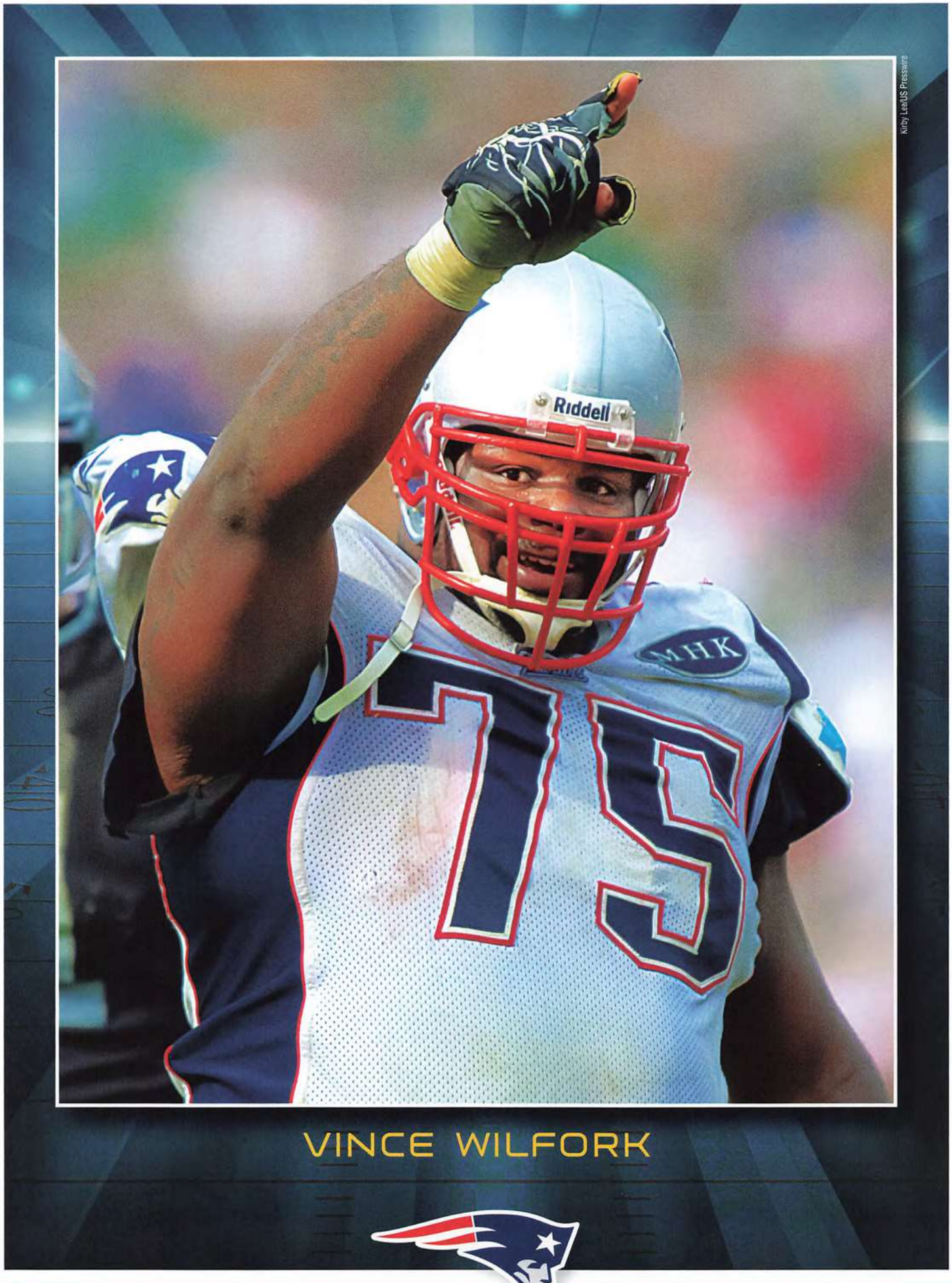
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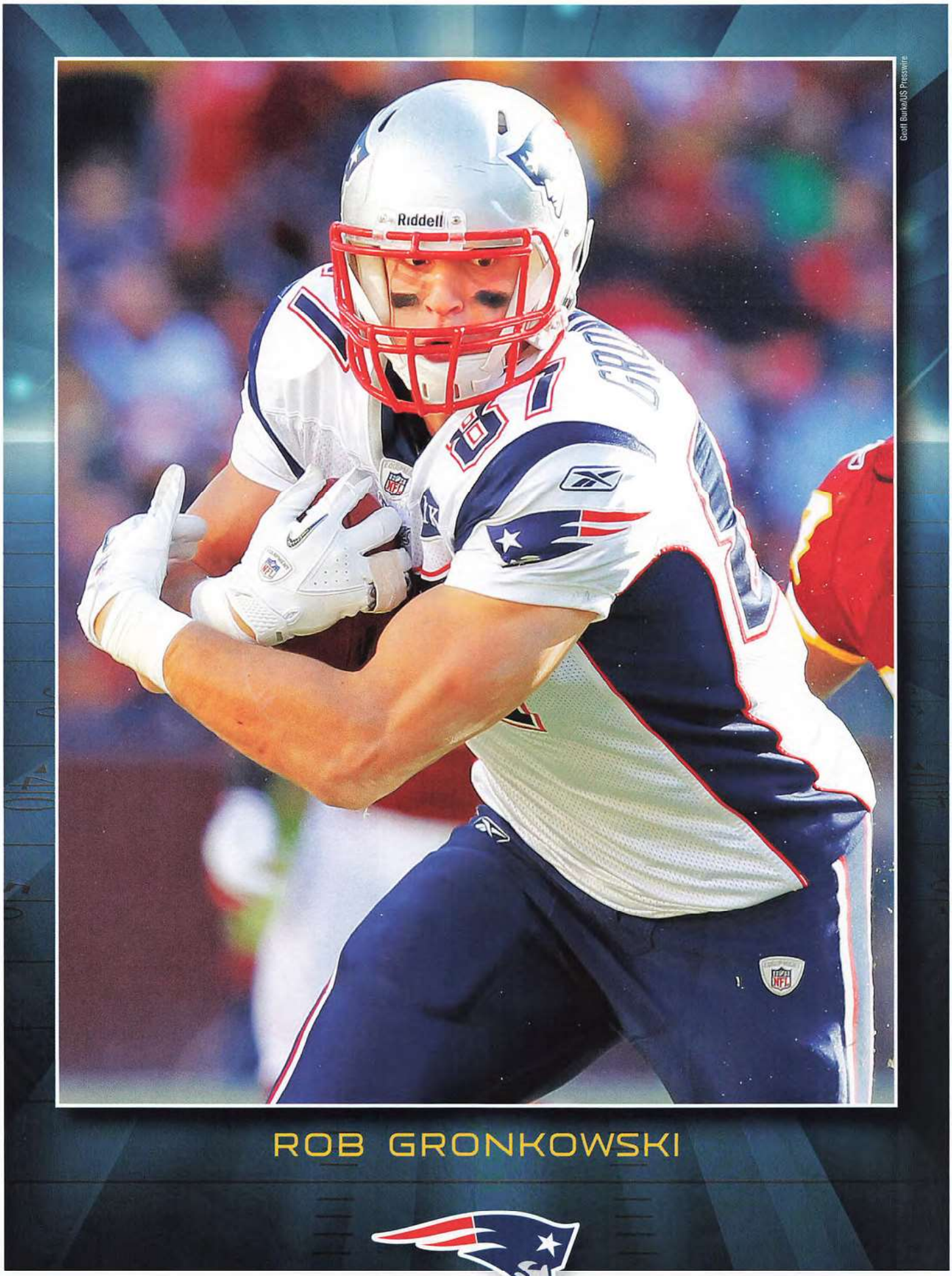

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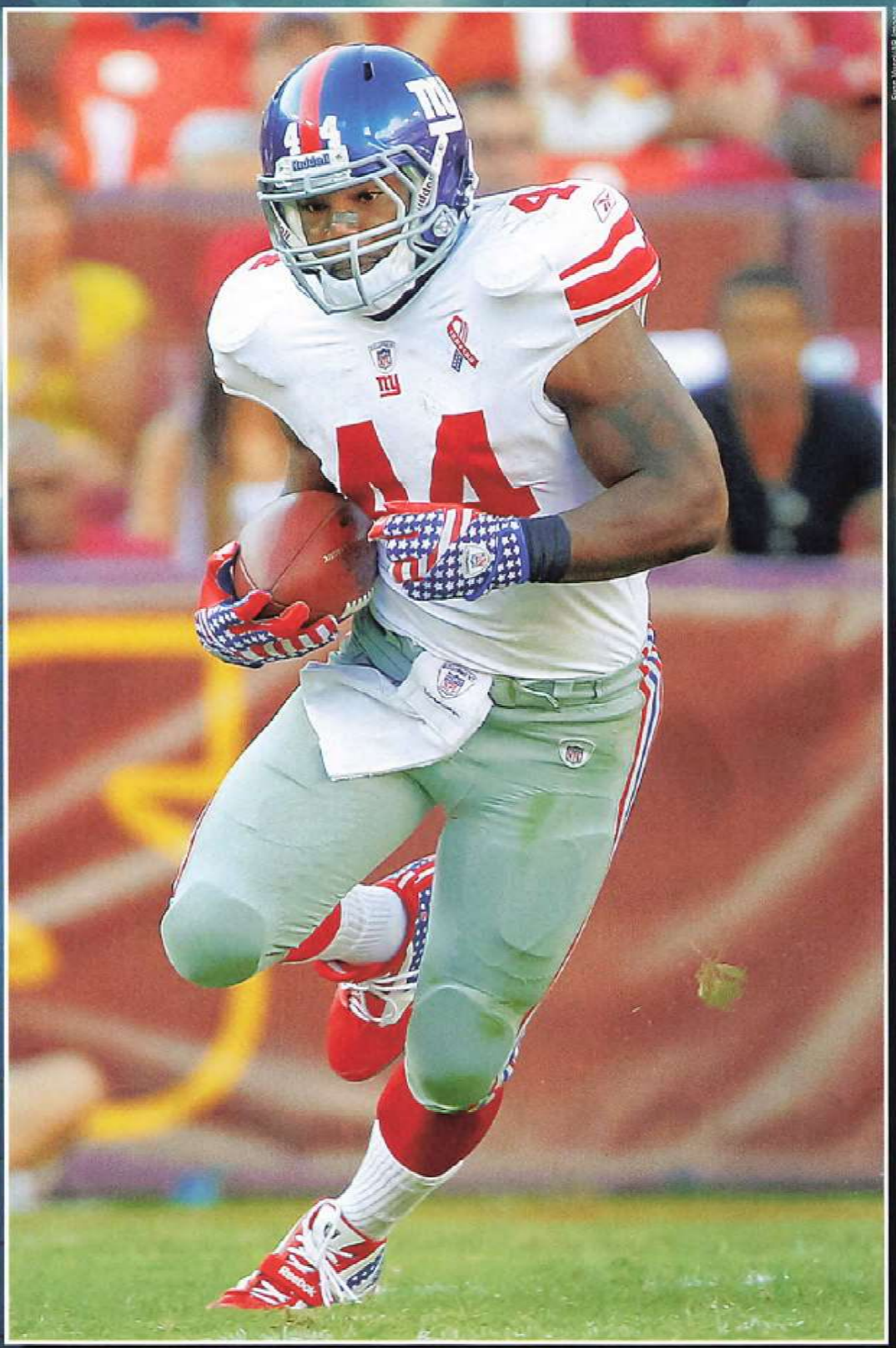

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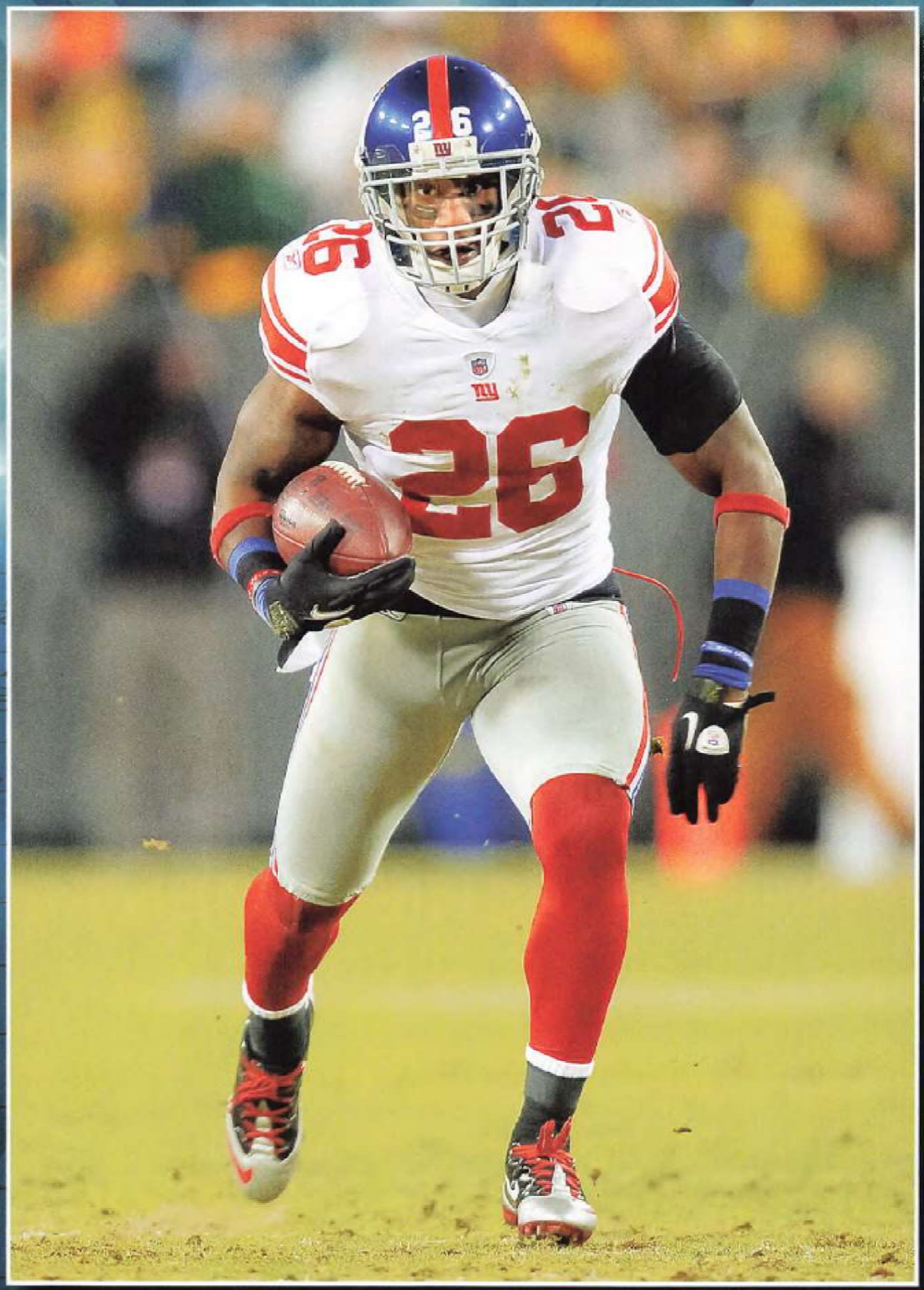

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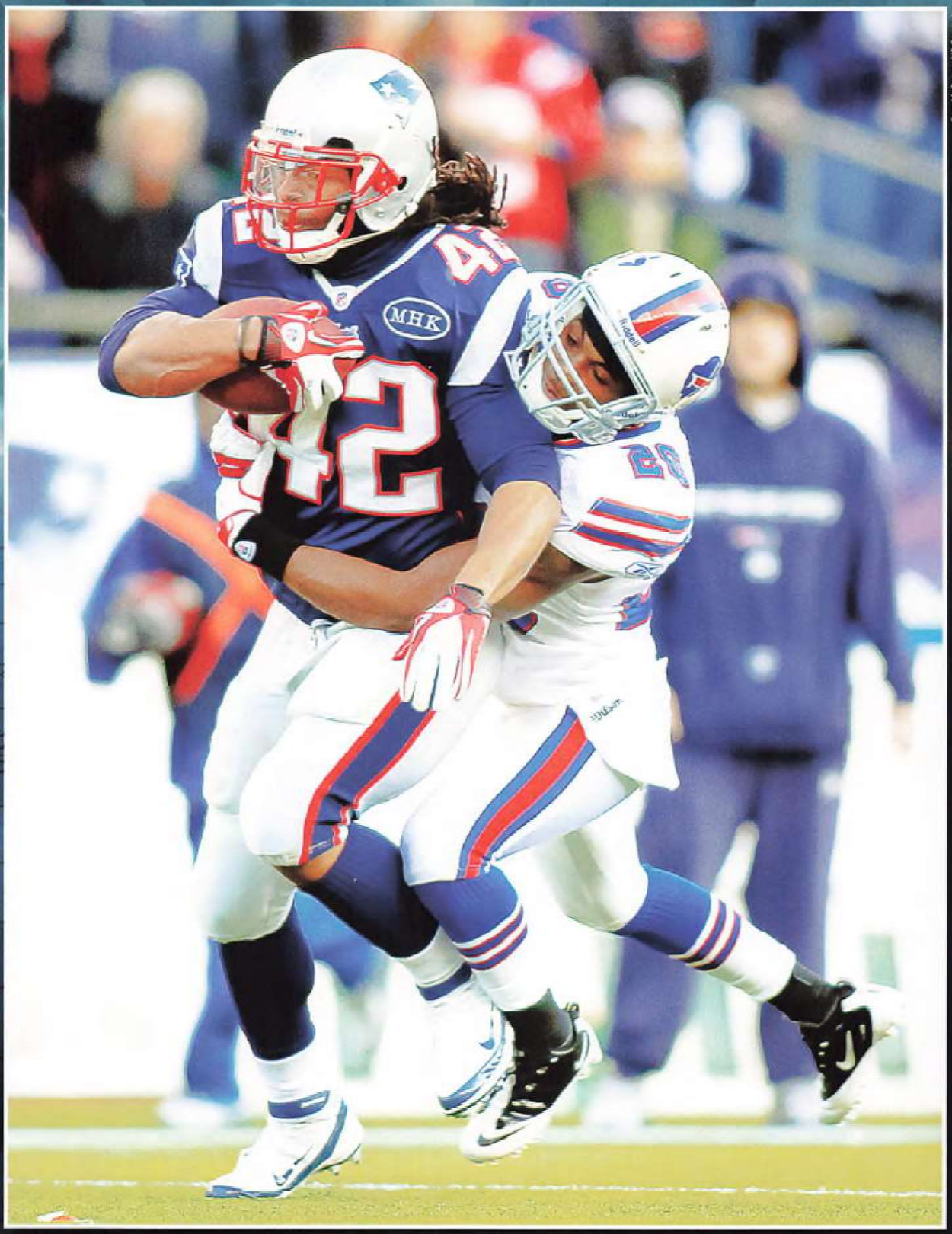

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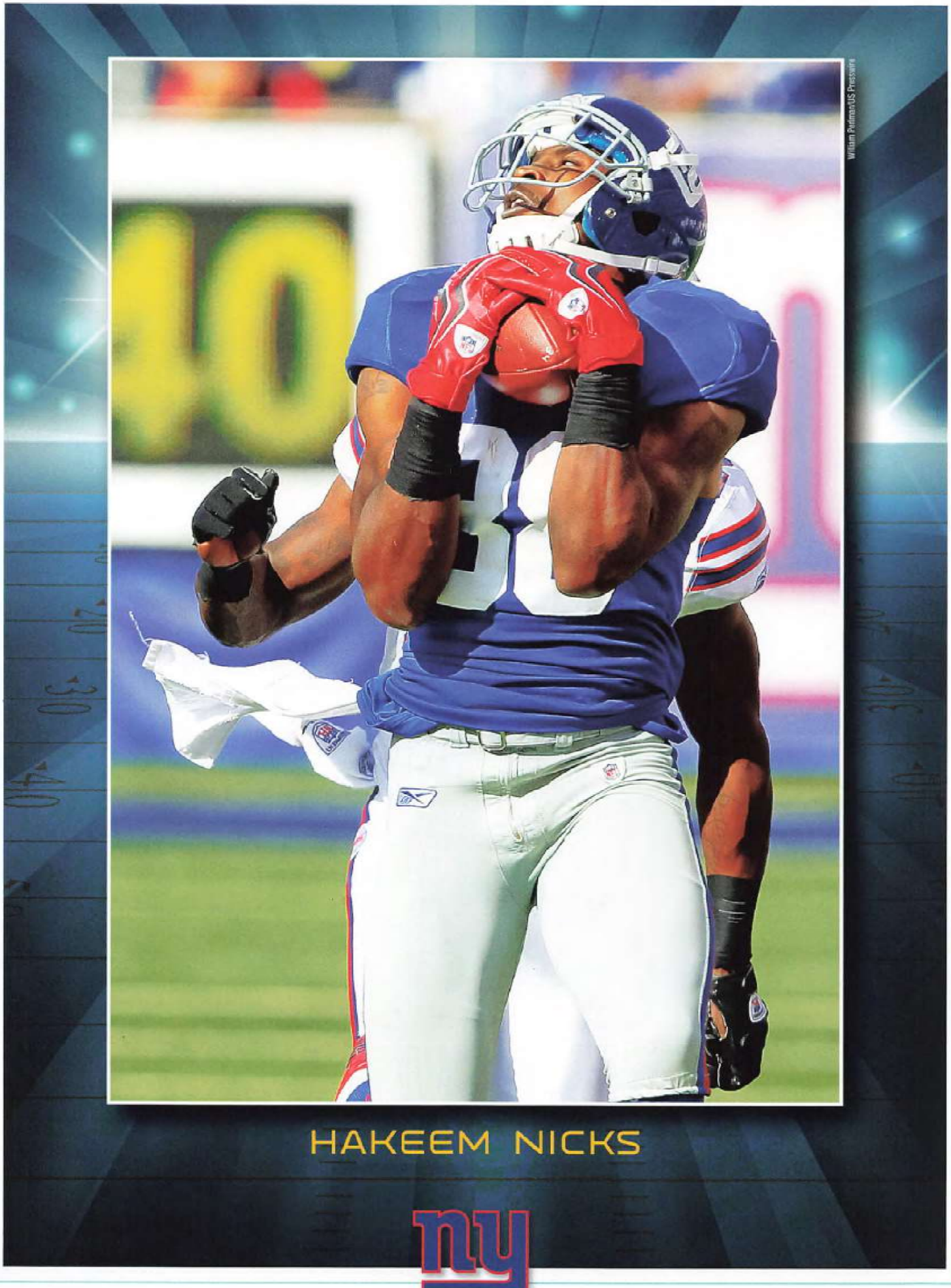
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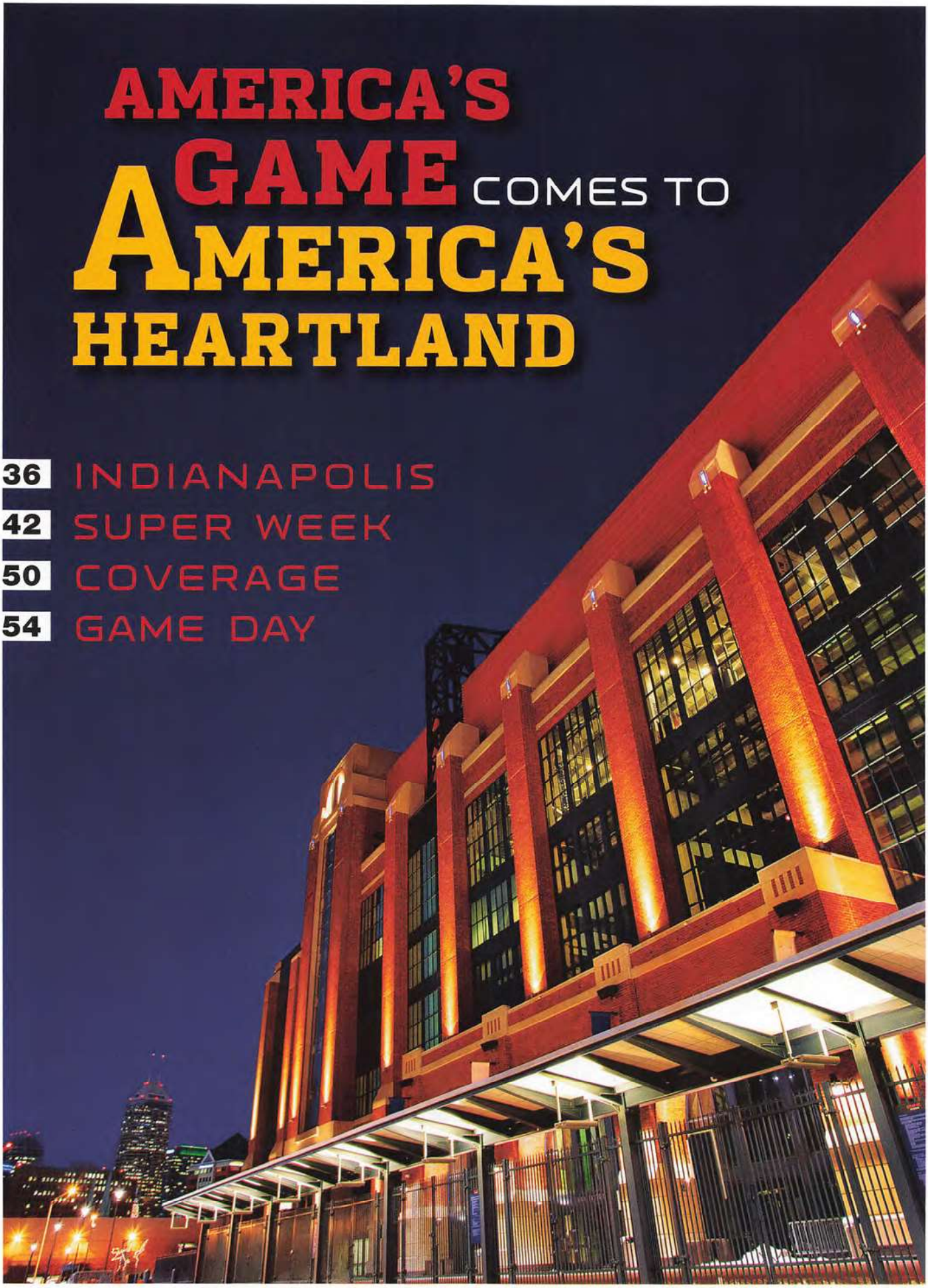

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On behalf of the Indianapolis Host Committee, it's a pleasure to welcome you to the home of Super Bowl XLVI.

Indianapolis is a unique success story in the heart of the Midwest. Over the past 40 years, our city has morphed into a vibrant destination that plays host to significant events from the NCAA Men's Final Four to Gen Con, one of the city's largest conventions, and now the Super Bowl.

With world-class attractions and first-rate people, Indianapolis serves as a perfect host for visitors. Super Bowl XLVI will be remembered as the time people left their car keys in their suitcase and immersed themselves in an unforgettable downtown experience with unrivaled fun and fervor.

Whether ziplining down Capitol Avenue, watching television broadcasts live from Pan Am Plaza, or listening to bands rocking the stages of the Super Bowl Village, we hope your stay in Indianapolis is truly super!

Thank you for joining us and we look forward to seeing you again.

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Special Super Bowl tours of the stadium are being given 8 a.m. – 7 p.m. from Jan. 23 through Feb. 7, with tickets available at the Lucas Oil Stadium box office, NFL Experience box office, and ticketmaster.com.

SUPER BOWL XLVI

Whether you want to visit the world's biggest children's museum, walk through White River State Park in the heart of downtown, or spend an evening in the lively Broad Ripple Village section, there's plenty to do in Indianapolis. More info is available at visitindy.com, indydt.com, and IndianapolisSuperBowl.com.

Photos courtesy of Indianapolis Super Bowl Host Committee

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SPIKE

_GET REAL

Photos courtesy of Indianapolis Super Bowl Host Committee

HOST COMMITTEE OUTREACH

Darron Cummings/AP Images

For the 2012 Indianapolis Super Bowl Host Committee, hosting this game has been more than what you'll see on the field on Super Bowl Sunday. We have engaged our community and our state, traditional and non-traditional fans, and both the young and the young-at-heart. Through many of our community programs, we will leave a legacy for generations to remember. Here's a sample of what we've been doing:

WITNESS THE RESULTS OF THE NEAR EASTSIDE LEGACY INITIATIVE

Rather than a single building or project, the Legacy Initiative includes 21 neighborhoods known as the "Near Eastside" where residents already were hard at work revitalizing their community. With their ongoing efforts and the added momentum of the Super Bowl, more than $154 million is being invested in this neighborhood, including business redevelopment, housing—new and refurbished—and infrastructure improvements. In a neighborhood with 35,000 residents, the ribbon was cut this week on the first community center in the area. The Chase Near Eastside Legacy Center houses the Indianapolis Youth Education Town and provides more than 400 hours of community programming each week for residents.

MEET TRACI RUNGE

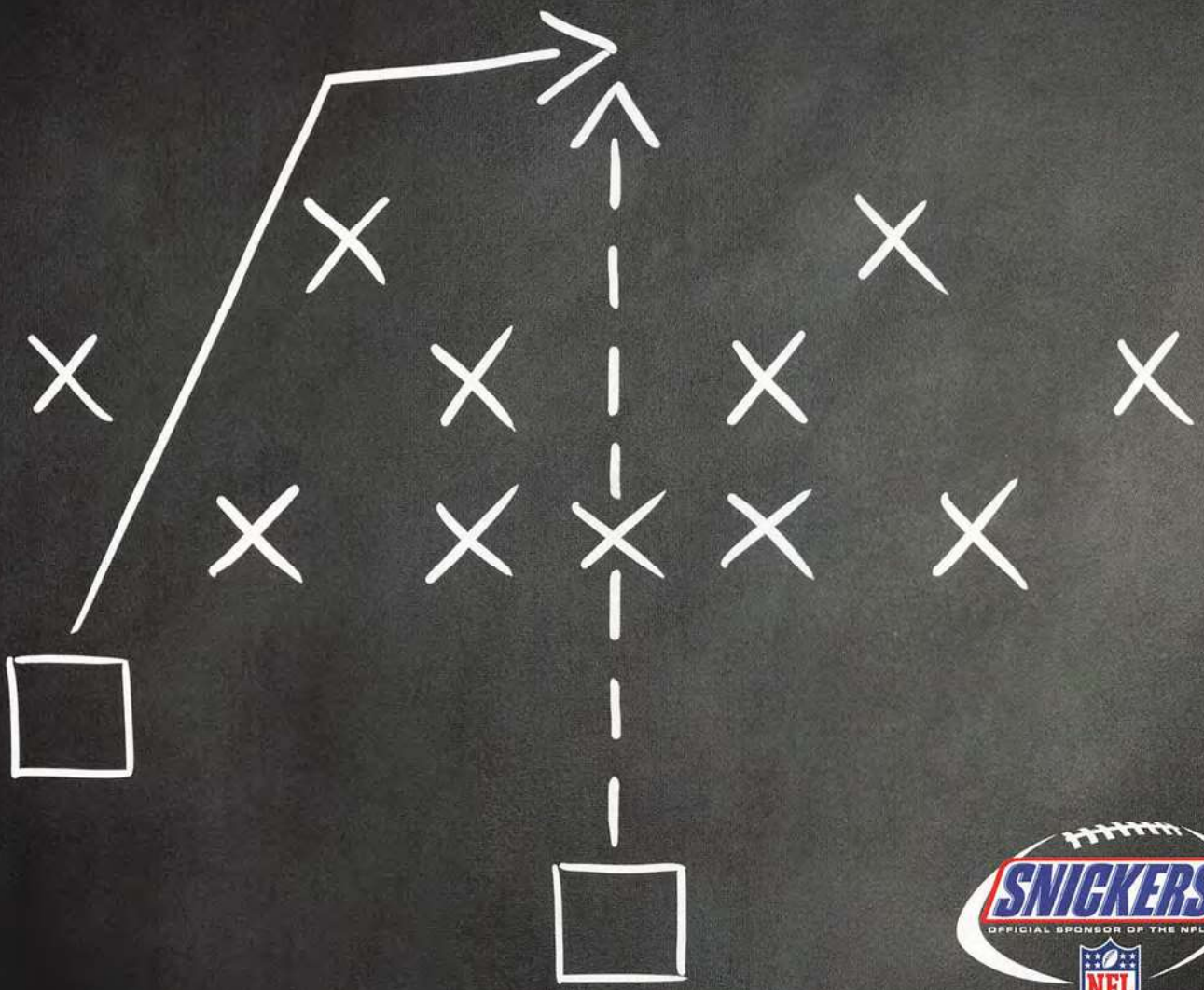
She's the first woman in the world to donate healthy and cancerous breast tissue to the Susan G. Komen for the Cure Tissue Bank at IU Simon Cancer Center. In partnership with the Komen Tissue Bank in Indianapolis, the only known tissue bank in the world to collect healthy breast tissue for research, the Host Committee developed Indy's Super Cure. Through Indy's Super Cure, we've raised $1 million and collected almost 1,000 healthy breast tissue donations to continue this critical research. At the same time, we've capitalized on Indianapolis' robust health and life sciences resources to propel the search for a cure.

HAVE YOU SEEN SOMEONE WEARING A BLUE AND WHITE SUPER SCARF?

Were you greeted in your hotel by a personally colored welcome card? Throughout the last four years, the Host Committee has developed many community programs—some environmentally-based like 1st & Green, others focused on youth. Over the course of Super Bowl Week, visitors to our community will witness the results of these efforts. More than 18,000 youth from across Indiana colored welcome cards for hotel guests. More than 12,000 scarves were handcrafted by people from 45 states, the District of Columbia, and three other countries. Volunteers and frontline hospitality workers have been sporting the blue and white creations all week!

Our community is draped in super service for a super week—one week whose impact will be felt for years to come.

Peanut Butter Squared perfects the play.



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Courtesy of Indianapolis Super Bowl Host Committee

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

Starting Friday, Jan. 27, the Super Bowl Village will transform the heart of downtown Indianapolis into a 10-day, three-block interactive festival of football. Fans can celebrate in the excitement and thrills of "all things football" amid world-class restaurants, eclectic bars, special attractions, live broadcasts, and diverse retail options.

Situated along Georgia Street, the Super Bowl Village is a free, family-friendly gathering spot leading to the front door of the NFL Experience in the Indiana Convention Center.

Activities include: two stages of live concerts with more than 60 bands; light and pyrotechnics shows; Tailgate Town (with tailgate competitions and football turf offering interactive game playing); and a Zip Line running down Capitol Avenue, allowing fans a quick zip for just $10.

More than 110 hours of TV coverage, ESPN Radio shows, and other related content will be produced at Pan Am Plaza.

For those seeking a climate-controlled environment, the inflated vortex dome will provide more than 2,500 feet of warm space with gaming and immersive video.

SEE THE MEDIA AT WORK

For the first time, fans can attend Super Bowl Media Day. It takes place **Tuesday, Jan. 31, at Lucas Oil Stadium** and features thousands of media from around the world interviewing members of the two Super Bowl teams.

Fans will be able to sit in the stands and also have access to the Stadium Club, and concession and merchandise stands will be open. Those in attendance will receive a gift bag that includes a radio so they can listen to the day's coverage on NFL Network and hear select player interviews.

For tickets, go to ticketmaster.com or visit the Lucas Oil Stadium box office.

Fans also can get **behind-the-scenes access to portions of the Super Bowl Media Center** (located on the 3rd floor of the JW Marriott). While there, they can see NFL players, celebrities, and other athletes interviewed on NFL Network, other television outlets, and on Radio Row, and will have access to sponsored interactive zones.

Tickets for the Media Center are free and available at the JW Marriott during peak hours of operation.

ONE SUPER APP

Super Bowl Week comes to your Android or iOS mobile phone or tablet with the **NFL's Super Bowl XLVI Mobile Guide App**. The app includes an interactive 3D map of downtown Indianapolis, Lucas Oil Stadium, and the surrounding area, along with a restaurant and nightlife guide, a full event schedule, and more.

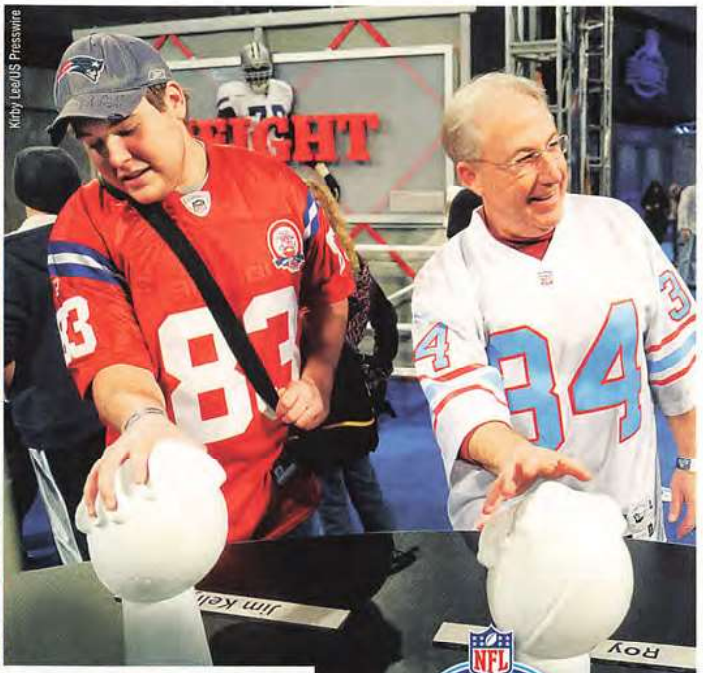
Use the app to check out the NFL Experience, the Super Bowl Village, concerts, and happenings, and to plan your way into Lucas Oil Stadium for the game. It's your can't-miss companion for your entire stay in Indianapolis.

You can also follow all of the latest Super Bowl social media throughout the week with NFL Huddle, a social media hub of NFL content related to Super Bowl XLVI.

To download the app, visit SuperBowl.com/guide, or text "guide" to MYNFL (69635).

David J. Phillip/AP Images

Kirby Lee/US Presswire



COUNT ON A GREAT EXPERIENCE

The NFL Experience is one of the biggest attractions taking place during Super Bowl Week. The interactive theme park offers games, clinics, displays, entertainment, autograph sessions, and the largest football memorabilia show ever. It's a great family event…all for a good cause.

Proceeds from ticket sales allow NFL Charities to donate a $1 million Super Bowl Legacy Grant to benefit youth in the local community. These funds are used to establish enrichment centers for under-served youth.

Friday, Jan. 27, through Saturday, Feb. 4, at the Indiana Convention Center

Tickets: $25 for adults / $20 for children under 12 (includes all games and attractions)

Purchase tickets through ticketmaster.com, by calling 866.TIX.4NFL, or at the Convention Center when the NFL Experience is open

NFL Experience Hours of Operation:

Friday	Jan. 27	3 p.m. - 10 p.m.
Saturday	Jan. 28	10 a.m. - 10 p.m.
Sunday	Jan. 29	11 a.m. - 8 p.m.
Monday	Jan. 30	3 p.m. - 10 p.m.
Tuesday	Jan. 31	3 p.m. - 10 p.m.
Wednesday	Feb. 1	3 p.m. - 10 p.m.
Thursday	Feb. 2	3 p.m. - 10 p.m.
Friday	Feb. 3	3 p.m. - 10 p.m.
Saturday	Feb. 4	10 a.m. - 10 p.m.

Wuz Good

MUSIC MATTERS

Diverse musical offerings are again part of the annual Pepsi Super Bowl Fan Jam Series that runs three nights during Super Bowl Week.

It begins **Wednesday, Feb. 1**, with the Pepsi Musica Fan Jam, the ultimate Latino musical celebration, taking place at the NFL Experience at the **Indiana Convention Center. The concert starts at 7 p.m.** and features Don Omar, Larry Hernandez, and Alejandra Guzman. Free tickets are available at ticketmaster.com, and a one-hour version of the show will air on Univision on Saturday, Feb. 4, at 7 p.m. ET.

On Thursday, Feb. 2, Gym Class Heroes, B.o.B., and the All-American Rejects will rock the **Pepsi Coliseum** at the popular VH1 NFL Pepsi Super Bowl Fan Jam concert. Fans can get free tickets at ticketmaster.com or register to be part of the VH1 television audience by visiting 1iota.com. **Doors open at 6 p.m.** and the music begins at 7 p.m., with the VH1 broadcast kicking off at 9 p.m. ET.

There's also a CMT Crossroads Pepsi Super Bowl Fan Jam concert on Saturday, Feb. 4, at Pepsi Coliseum. This show, featuring Steven Tyler and Carrie Underwood, is a private event, but fans can see it later that night on CMT, starting at 11 p.m. ET.

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HAVE SOME FUN HELP A TON

Courtesy of Pro Football Hall of Fame

Many NFL-sanctioned events during Super Bowl Week are designed to assist those most in need, while providing participants a fun and rewarding experience. Events leading up to Super Bowl XLVI in Indianapolis include:

SPORTS CAREER EXPO

The NFL PREP Leadership Series: Sports Career Expo produced by Why Not Sports Inc., enlists professionals from all aspects of the sports industry to inform, educate, and enlighten high school student athletes about career opportunities available within the professional sports industry.

In partnership with NFL Player Engagement and their NFL PREP Program, Why Not Sports combines career exploration and education to encourage student athletes to make a successful transition from high school to college.

The year's event is set for **Thursday, Feb. 2, from 9 a.m. through 2 p.m. at the Pike Performing Arts Center.** Admission is free, but registration is required to attend.

To learn more about the program and to register, send an email to info@whynotsports.org or visit their website at whynotsports.org.

Courtesy of Rebuilding Together

KICKOFF TO REBUILD

Rebuilding Together, a national nonprofit dedicated to safe and healthy housing for low-income homeowners and families, is hosting its annual Kickoff to Rebuild. The event is being held in collaboration with Rebuilding Together Indianapolis, Indianapolis Super Bowl Host Committee, NFL Player Care Foundation, Carter's Kids Foundation, and Rebuilding Together's corporate partners.

For nearly two decades, Rebuilding Together has worked to revitalize low-income communities in Super Bowl cities. **This year, starting at 8 a.m. on Friday, Feb. 3, volunteers will be working in the Super Bowl Legacy Neighborhood of Near Eastside** to repair nearly a dozen homes and dedicate a new Carter's Kids playground.

More information is available at rebuildingtogether.org.

Courtesy of Why Not Sports, Inc.

HALL OF FAME LUNCHEON

The Pro Football Hall of Fame Merlin Olsen Luncheon supports the Pro Football Hall of Fame Enshrinees Assistance Fund. This fund provides grants for the benefit of all elected members of the Hall of Fame and their families in need of assistance.

Only 250 tickets are sold, creating an intimate environment, and the seated lunch has a Hall of Famer at each table.

This year's event, hosted by Anthony Muñoz, takes place **Friday, Feb. 3, starting at 11 a.m. at the Indianapolis Museum of Art.** For more info, go to profootballhof.com/hall/sbluncheon.aspx.

NFL ALUMNI PLAYER OF THE YEAR AWARDS SHOW

The Scottish Rite Cathedral hosts the 30th annual **NFL Alumni Player of the Year Awards Show on Friday, Feb. 3, (7:45 p.m.).** The dinner honors today's most outstanding players by position.

Award nominees are hand-selected and voted on by retired NFL players, and each honoree receives his award from a legend enshrined in the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

Ticket info is available at nflalumni.org.

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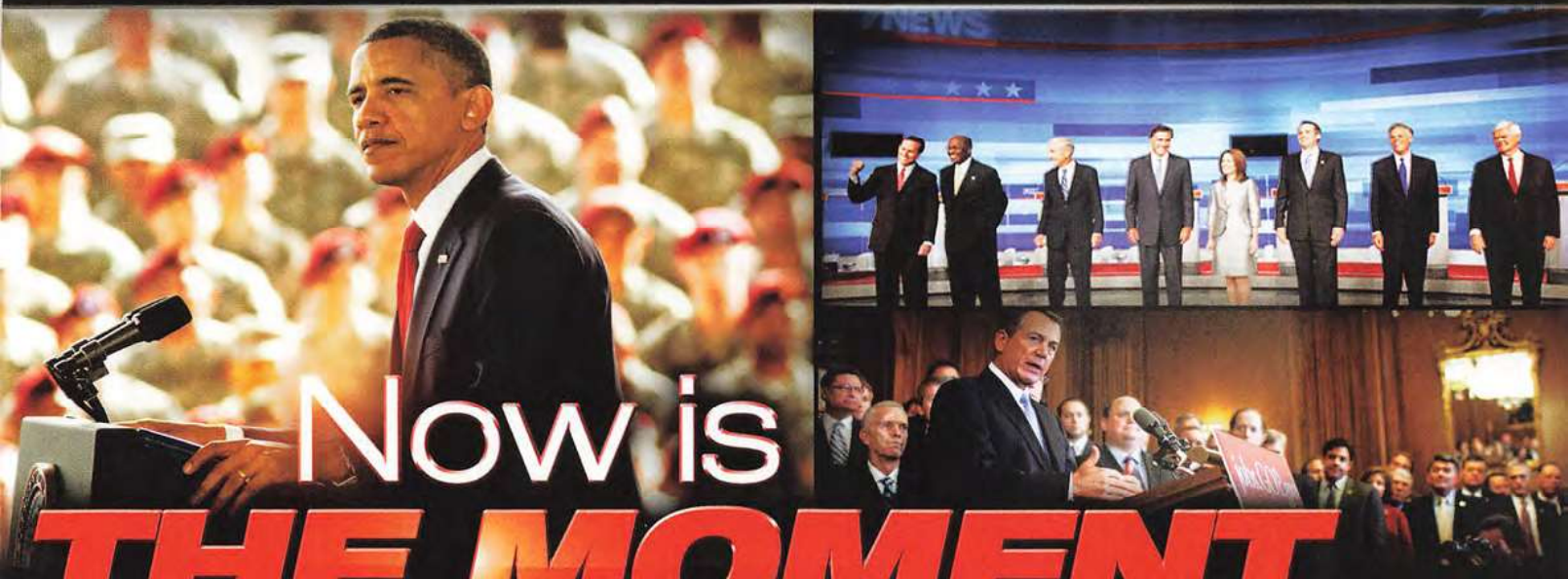

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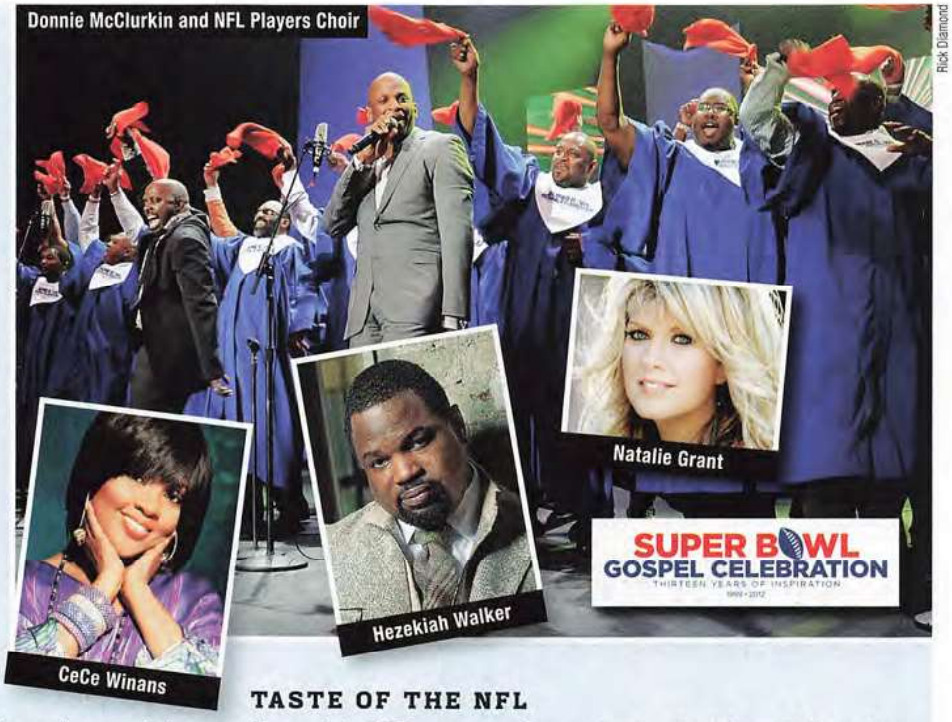
SB GOSPEL CELEBRATION

In its 13th year, the Super Bowl Gospel Celebration transcends traditional Super Bowl Weekend activities, bringing NFL players and Grammy Award-winning artists together on one stage.

This year's Celebration, sponsored by American Family Insurance and Verizon Wireless, is scheduled for **Friday, Feb. 3, (7:30 p.m.) at Butler University's Clowes Memorial Hall.** Hosted by Wayne Brady, performers include Natalie Grant, CeCe Winans, and Hezekiah Walker.

Since 2008, the NFL Players Choir has been part of the annual event. More than 40 active and former players show off their vocal talents under the direction of gospel icon Donnie McClurkin.



Tickets are available through superbowlgospel.com, with a portion of the proceeds benefiting national and local charities.

SUPER BOWL BREAKFAST

The NFL-sanctioned Athletes in Action Super Bowl Breakfast is held annually in the host city of the Super Bowl. **This year's 25th anniversary event is set for Saturday, Feb. 4 (8 a.m.), in Exposition Hall at the Indiana State Fairgrounds.**

The Super Bowl Breakfast features the presentation of the Bart Starr Award to a current NFL player for outstanding character and leadership in the home, on the field, and in the community. The award is voted on by his peers. Past winners include Drew Brees, Kurt Warner, LaDainian Tomlinson, and Darren Woodson.

Highlights of the program include interviews with Super Bowl players via video, exciting NFL Films highlights, interviews, humor, personal stories, testimonies, and a faith-based message.

Please call 800.416.9472 or visit superbowlbreakfast.com for more information.

NFL CHARITIES BOWLING

The seventh annual NFL Charities Super Bowl Celebrity Bowling Classic takes place **Saturday, Feb. 4, at the Woodland Bowling Center in Indianapolis. Registration begins at 11:00 a.m.**

Using the 3-6-9 handicap system, a team of four amateurs bowls two games each with rotating celebrity captains—including current and former NFL players and members of the Pro Football Hall of Fame. More than four dozen players are expected to attend.

Each bowler receives a commemorative Super Bowl XLVI bowling ball and pin, along with a gift bag of official Super Bowl merchandise. A silent auction will offer NFL memorabilia and autographed keepsakes.

Registration forms and additional information can be found at nflcharities.org.

TASTE OF THE NFL

Taste of the NFL, a nonprofit organization that's been dedicated to ending hunger in America for more than 20 years, **brings its annual Super Bowl "Party with a Purpose" to Indianapolis on Saturday, Feb. 4, at 7 p.m.** The event takes place at Gleaners Food Bank of Indiana, one of the nation's largest food banks.

The strolling food and wine event pairs a chef from each NFL city with a current or former NFL player and gives guests the opportunity to sample specialty foods, mingle with NFL legends, participate in a silent auction, and enjoy entertainment—all to benefit food banks locally and across the country.

Performing at this year's event is country singer/songwriter Sara Evans. Other special guests include: Taste of the NFL's National Honorary Chair Tony Dungy; Ted Allen, the Emmy Award-winning host of *Chopped* on Food Network, who will serve as Culinary Host; and Laura Kaeppeler, the newly crowned Miss America.

Tickets are available by visiting TasteoftheNFL.com or calling 952.835.7621. Since 1992, Taste of the NFL has distributed more than $11 million to hunger relief organizations.

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Ben Liebenberg/NFL Network

(Left to right): **Rich Eisen, Deion Sanders, Steve Mariucci, Marshall Faulk, and Michael Irvin are all part of NFL Network's Super Bowl coverage.**

100+ HOURS LIVE FROM INDY

NFL Network is the only network dedicated entirely to America's favorite sport, and will cover Super Bowl XLVI like no one else can, delivering more than 100 hours of programming from Indianapolis. Coverage will include an eight-and-a-half-hour *NFL GameDay Morning at the Super Bowl* pregame show and a new *Super Bowl Saturday Night* special that will preceed the first-ever NFL awards program (see below).

This marks NFL Network's ninth year broadcasting live from the site of the Super Bowl, providing fans with the comprehensive, round-the-clock coverage they crave. With NFL Network programming and content available on television, online, and NFL Mobile only from Verizon, football fans are only a click away from all the action in Indy, with additional reports, stories, interviews, and videos available on NFL.com.

NFL Network's schedule includes the nightly *NFL Total Access at the Super Bowl*, which features breaking news, special guest interviews, analysis, and more. During the day, *Super Bowl Live* takes you through the week with NFC and AFC championship team arrivals, practice reports, and **exclusive live coverage of Super Bowl XLVI Media Day at Lucas Oil Stadium (Tuesday, Jan. 31).**

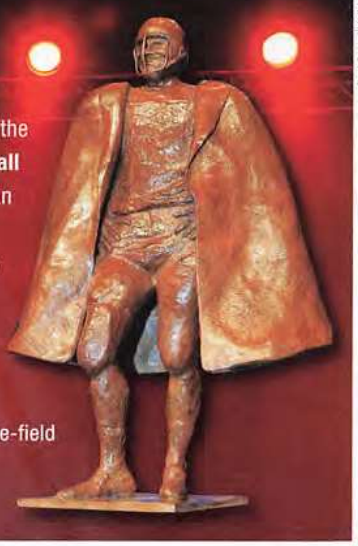
Fans can also look for coverage of key NFL press conferences, including those of Commissioner Roger Goodell, the NFC and AFC head coaches, and Madonna for the Bridgestone Halftime Show.

Additionally, *Playbook*, *The Coaches Show*, *Sound FX*, and *No Huddle* have special Super Bowl editions, and **the Pro Football Hall of Fame will again unveil its latest enshrinement class exclusively on NFL Network (Saturday, Feb. 4, 5:30 p.m. ET).**

The network's on-air personalities covering Super Bowl XLVI have more than 15 Super Bowl rings, multiple Emmy nominations, and are many of the most recognizable names on television. They include Rich Eisen, Marshall Faulk, Deion Sanders, Michael Irvin, Steve Mariucci, Kurt Warner, Mike Mayock, Warren Sapp, Brian Billick, Sterling Sharpe, Joe Theismann, Heath Evans, Brian Baldinger, Michael Lombardi, Jamie Dukes, Daryl Johnston, Willie McGinest, Andrew Siciliano, Kara Henderson, Fran Charles, Scott Hanson, Melissa Stark, Jason La Canfora, Lindsay Soto, Stacey Dales, Steve Wyche, Jay Glazer, Albert Breer, and Steve Cyphers.

On game day, NFL Network delivers the longest pregame show on television with *NFL GameDay Morning at the Super Bowl* at 9 a.m. ET live from Lucas Oil Stadium. Following the game, *NFL GameDay Final at the Super Bowl* puts a wrap on the 2011 season from the field with interviews with the newest Super Bowl champions.

SATURDAY NIGHT SPECIAL



Paul Spinelli/AP Images

Start your Super Bowl celebration a night early with *NFL Honors*, a prime-time awards special that will see the National Football League salute its best players and plays from the 2011 season. **The star-studded football and entertainment event, which airs Saturday, Feb. 4, from 9-11 p.m. ET on NBC,** will become an annual tradition from the Super Bowl host city.

Kicking off the evening will be a red carpet show at 8 p.m. on NFL Network, featuring the sights and sounds of Super Bowl Week and many of the stars who will be celebrating the best of the NFL later in the night.

Alec Baldwin hosts the show from the Murat Theatre in Indianapolis, which will feature a live performance from Lenny Kravitz. Many current and former players will be in attendance as the NFL and Associated Press announce their annual accolades in an awards show format for the first time.

Among the presentations will be the Walter Payton NFL Man of the Year Award, in recognition of a player's off-the-field community service as well as his playing excellence. Seven of the awards will be from Associated Press, including AP Most Valuable Player and AP Coach of the Year.

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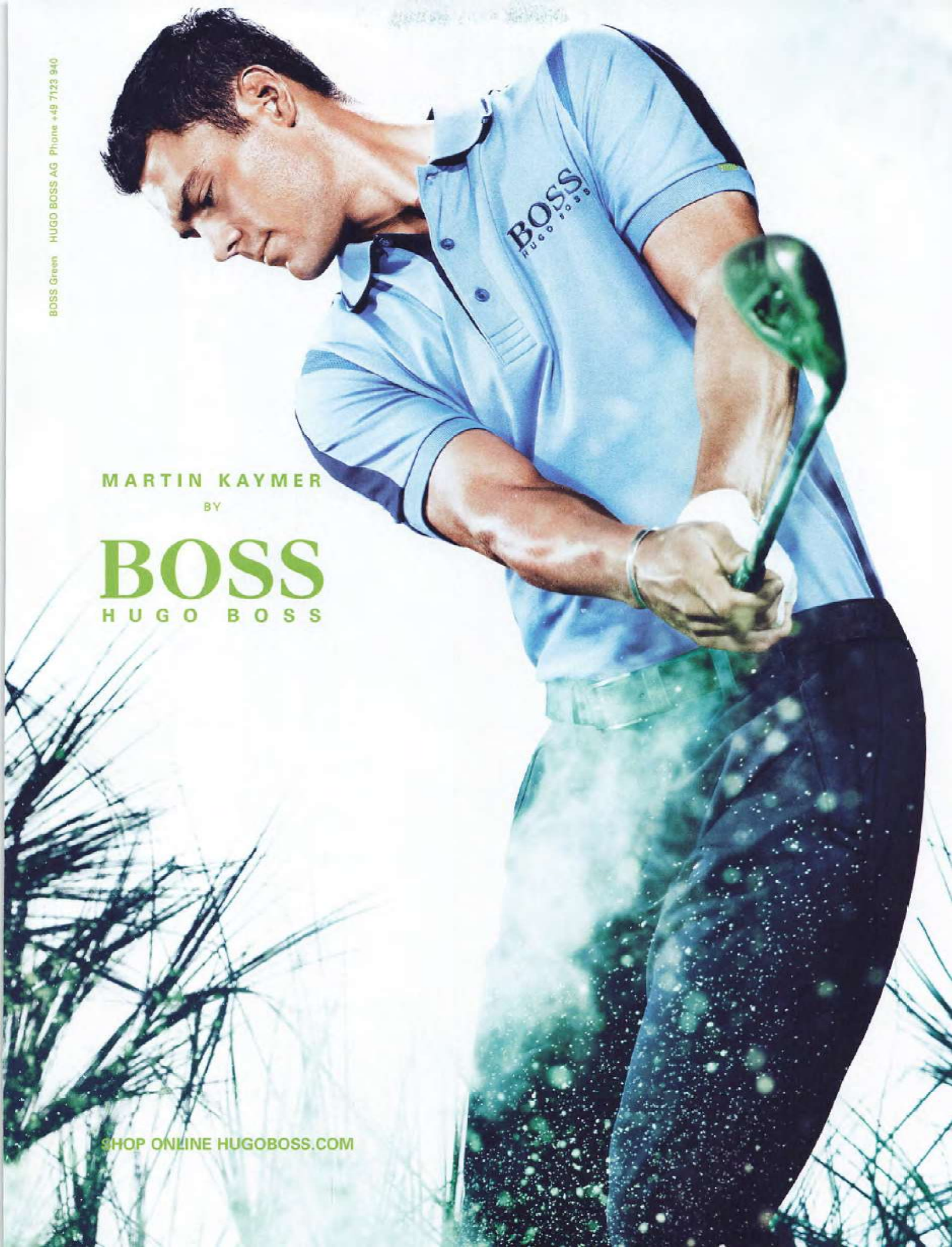

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BROADCAST INFO
TV AND RADIO

Super Bowl XLVI on NBC marks the network's 17th Super Bowl broadcast, tying CBS for the most ever. It's also the eighth Super Bowl assignment for Emmy Award-winning play-by-play broadcaster Al Michaels and the second for 12-time Emmy Award-winning analyst Cris Collinsworth.

Michele Tafoya will serve as the sideline reporter. Fred Gaudelli (producer) and Drew Esocoff (director) work their fourth Super Bowl together.

NBC's game-day coverage begins at Noon ET from Lucas Oil Stadium with the *Super Bowl XLVI Pregame Show*. Co-hosts Bob Costas and Dan Patrick will be joined by Super Bowl-winning head coach Tony Dungy, two-time Super Bowl champion Rodney Harrison, Peter King of *Sports Illustrated*, and Mike Florio of ProFootballTalk on NBCSports.com, providing up-to-the-minute news and features leading up to kickoff.

Sam Flood, executive producer of NBC Sports and NBC Sports Network, is the executive in charge of production of the NBC *Super Bowl XLVI Pregame Show*. Famed Olympic director Bucky Gunts directs.

During Super Bowl Week, NBC Sports Network will present more than 18 hours of live coverage from Indianapolis, highlighted by *Costas Tonight: Live from the Super Bowl*, Thursday, Feb. 2 (8-10 p.m. ET), featuring some of the NFL's biggest stars and newsmakers.

Courtesy of NBC Sports

Al Michaels (left) and Cris Collinsworth will call Super Bowl XLVI for NBC.

For the first time, the Super Bowl will be streamed online and on select mobile phones. NFL.com and NBCSports.com will provide online coverage, which will come from NBC's TV coverage of the game. Complementing that stream will be a number of extra features to enrich the viewing experience, including additional camera angles, in-game highlights, live statistics, and other interactive elements. Mobile phone streaming will take place through NFL Mobile only from Verizon, an app that first launched in 2010.

WESTWOOD ONE

DG DIAL GLOBAL SPORTS

For the 25th consecutive year and 39th time overall, the Westwood One/Dial Global Radio Network will serve as the exclusive network radio home of the Super Bowl.

Beginning at 5 p.m. ET, Kevin Harlan and Boomer Esiason will describe all the action to millions of listeners tuned in on more than 600 radio stations across America, and in 170 countries and nearly 250 ships at sea via the American Forces Radio Network. Fans can also hear the broadcast on Sirius/XM satellite radio, as well as on NFL.com and Verizon mobile devices.

This will be Esiason's 12th Super Bowl broadcast with Westwood One and Harlan's second. Mark Malone and Hall of Famer James Lofton patrol the sidelines at Lucas Oil Stadium. Emmy Award-winning sportscaster Jim Gray hosts the pregame and halftime shows, while Scott Graham kicks off the coverage with *Super Bowl Preview* at 3 p.m. ET, followed by *Super Sunday* at 4 p.m.

Larry Costigan and Mike Eaby are coordinating producers and Howard Deneroff is the executive producer of the network's coverage.

Westwood One/Dial Global is the nation's leader in play-by-play radio sports. Its other sports programming includes NCAA football and basketball (including the Final Four), the Olympics, and The Masters.

Kevin Harlan

Boomer Esiason

UNIVISION Radio

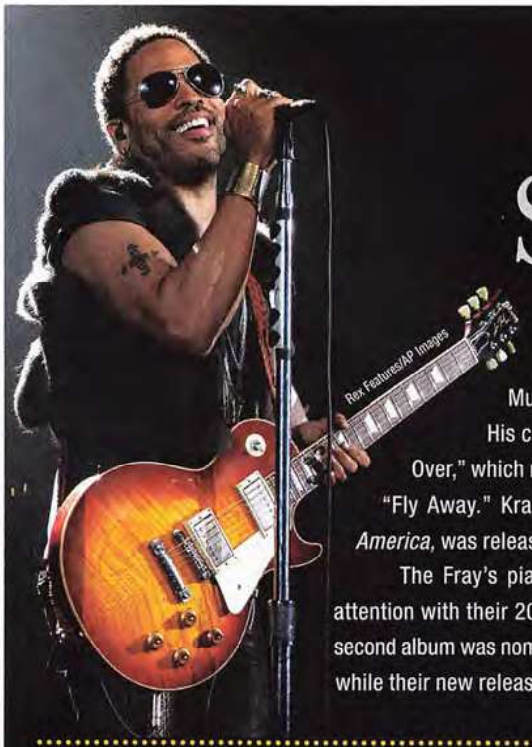
America's Spanish-speaking audience can listen to Super Bowl XLVI live on Univision Radio, the No. 1 Spanish radio network in the United States and official Spanish radio partner of the NFL.

The network's signature sports program, *Locura Deportiva*, opens the broadcast with a two-hour Super Bowl pregame edition live from Lucas Oil Stadium. Rafa "El Alcalde," the voice of Univision Radio Sports, hosts the show and will handle play-by-play of the game.

Jack Hobbs is the executive producer of Super Bowl XLVI on Univision Radio, and Lily Martin is in charge of on-site production.

Rafa "El Alcalde"

PREGAME FESTIVITIES


Rex Features/AP Images

Singer-songwriter **LENNY KRAVITZ** and the band **THE FRAY** are the featured performers in the *Super Bowl XLVI Pregame Show*.

Kravitz has been making brilliant music for more than 20 years since his landmark 1989 debut *Let Love Rule*. In that time, he has sold over 35 million albums, won four Grammy Awards (for Best Male Rock Vocal Performance four straight years between 1999 and 2002), and received the 2002 American Music Award for Favorite Pop/Rock Male Artist. His catalogue includes the hits "It Aint Over 'til It's Over," which reached No. 2 on the U.S. charts, "Again," and "Fly Away." Kravitz's ninth studio album, *Black and White America*, was released in September.

Peter Kramer/AP Images

The Fray's piano-driven sound caught the music world's attention with their 2005 hit "How to Save a Life." Their self-titled second album was nominated for a Grammy for Best Pop Vocal Album, while their new release, *Scars & Stories*, is available this month.

AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL

The power of two will be heard when **BLAKE SHELTON** and **MIRANDA LAMBERT**, country music stars who were married in 2011, perform "America the Beautiful" prior to Super Bowl XLVI. Shelton, who appears on the NBC show *The Voice*, has been topping the charts since his 2001 release "Austin." One of Nashville's top hit-makers, six of his last seven singles, including "Honey Bee" from the recent *Red River Blue* CD, have reached No. 1. Lambert's 2005 debut album *Kerosene* went platinum, and in 2008 she had her first Top 10 hit with "Gunpowder & Lead." She released her most recent album, *Four the Record*, last fall. It includes the hit single "Baggage Claim."

Frank Micelotta/AP Images

NATIONAL ANTHEM

Pop music sensation **KELLY CLARKSON** has come a long way since winning the debut season of *American Idol* in 2002. She now joins an exclusive list of artists to perform the national anthem at the Super Bowl. A lot has happened in between: she's a two-time Grammy Award winner who has sold more than 20 million albums worldwide and notched seven Top 10 singles. Her 2004 album *Breakaway* went 6x-platinum and spawned five Top 10 hits. It also won her Grammy Awards for Best Pop Vocal Album and Best Female Pop Vocal Performance ("Since U Been Gone"). Her latest album, *Stronger*, was released last October and includes the hit "Mr. Know It All."

Frank Micelotta/AP Images

TOSS AND TROPHY

While the Super Bowl helps make legends, some of football's all-time greats will help get this year's game started. The Pro Football Hall of Fame's Class of 2012, announced on the eve of Super Bowl XLVI, will participate in the ceremonial coin flip. This year's Hall of Fame finalists included: five-time Super Bowl champion defensive end Charles Haley; Super Bowl XL-winning running back Jerome Bettis; Edward DeBartolo Jr., owner of the 49ers when they captured five Super Bowls; and two-time Super Bowl-winning head coach Bill Parcells.

The NFL also will salute Hall of Fame receiver Raymond Berry, who played his entire 13-year career with the Colts and won two NFL championships (1958 and 1959). Berry will participate in the Vince Lombardi Trophy ceremony by carrying the trophy to the stage and delivering it to Commissioner Roger Goodell, who will then present it to this year's champions.

NFL Photos/AP Images

Raymond Berry

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THE HALFTIME SHOW
MADONNA

Joel Ryan/AP Images

The *Bridgestone Super Bowl Halftime Show* is the most-watched musical event of the year. Last year's show had more than 162 million viewers in the United States.

Seven-time Grammy Award winner Madonna, the top-selling female recording artist of all time, performs in the *Bridgestone Super Bowl XLVI Halftime Show*.

A world-class entertainer, singer, songwriter, producer, director, and video visionary, Madonna has sold more than 300 million records in her career. She was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2008.

Her catalogue includes countless No. 1 hits, including "Like a Virgin," "Papa Don't Preach," "Vogue," and "Take a Bow," and she once had 16 straight releases reach the Top Five—a record for a female artist—starting with 1984's "Lucky Star," which peaked at No. 4, and continuing through "Cherish" five years later.

Madonna's list of Grammy Awards includes Best Pop Vocal Album for *Ray of Light* in 1999, while 2007's *Confessions on a Dance Floor* won the Grammy for Best Electronic/Dance Album. She's also received three American Music Awards and more than three dozen Billboard Music Awards.

Madonna's 2008 *Sticky & Sweet* tour was the most successful by a solo artist in history, and she's now working on a new album slated for release later this year.

In 1985, Madonna made her acting debut in *Desperately Seeking Susan*, and in 1997 she won the Golden Globe for Best Actress for her performance in *Evita*. Her new film, *W.E.*, which she directed, wrote, and produced, opens nationally on Feb. 3, two days prior to Super Bowl XLVI.

To create her Super Bowl halftime performance, Madonna is partnering with Cirque du Soleil, Jamie King, and multimedia artists from Moment Factory.

PREGAME AND HALFTIME PRODUCTION TEAM

THE PREGAME AND HALFTIME SHOWS ARE NFL NETWORK PRODUCTIONS

Executive Producer
Ricky Kirshner

Directed by
Hamish Hamilton

Executive in Charge of Production
Rob Paine

Production Designer
Bruce Rodgers

Lighting Designer
Al Gurdon

Halftime Show Conceived By
Jamie King
Michel Laprise / Cirque du Soleil

Pregame Director
Gregg Gelfand

Associate Creative Director for Madonna
Tiffany Olson

Supervising Choreographer for Madonna
Tabitha Dumoi

Groups Choreographer
Kristen Patterson Terry

Charting Choreographer
Jason Olthoff

Talent Executive
David Paley

Associate Producers
Arianne Shean Wert
Lisa Geers

Production Manager for Madonna
Jake Berry

Graphics Producer
Sakchin Bessette
Joy Marsal
Moment Factory

Staging Supervisors
Tony Hauser
Cap Spence

Rigging Coordinator
Steve Thomas

Technical Manager
Bob Muller

Programmers
Michael "Oz" Owen
Peter Radice
Jason Rudolph

Lighting Directors
Bob Barnhart
Rich Gorrod
David Grill

Costume Designer
Beatrice Akerlund

Production Manager
Amanda McDonough

Art Directors
Douglas Cook
Lindsey Breslauer
Anthony Bishop
Shelly Rodgers
Derek Warner

Associate Directors
Sandy Restrepo
Susan Kopensky

Stage Managers
Gary Natoli
Jeffry Gitter
Harve Levine
Arthur Lewis
Vince Poxon
Karen Tasch

Special Effects
Ron Smith / J.E.M. F/X

Technical Directors
Rod Wardell
Eric Becker

Production Mixer
Paul Sandweiss

Front of House Mixer
Patrick Baltzell

Production Supervisors
Augie Max Vargas
Brad Duns

Production Coordinators
Rosanna Del Buono
Rick McGonegle
Stefani Ramirez
Angelo Ruzzo
Jim Stechshulte
Shelby Sundling

Talent Coordinators
Cat Del Buono
Joey Despenzero
Lindsay Frail
Jeff Gershon
Larry Shure

Assistant to the Executive Producer
Sarah Levine

Wardrobe Supervisor
David Profetta

Volunteer & Cast Procurement
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HEY KIDS: PLAY 60

Designed to tackle childhood obesity, NFL PLAY 60 is the league's national youth health and fitness campaign that encourages young fans to be active for at least 60 minutes a day. It was launched in October 2007.

PLAY 60 also is implemented locally as part of the NFL's in-school, after-school, and team-based programs. Since its inception, the NFL has committed more than $250 million to youth health and fitness through programming, grants, and media time for public service announcements.

The NFL and its teams have built more than 100 NFL Youth Fitness Zones, organized more than 1,500 PLAY 60 youth events, and integrated programs into more than 77,000 schools nationwide.

Supporting these efforts is an impressive list of partner organizations, including Action for Healthy Kids, Ad Council, American Heart Association, Cartoon Network, ESPN, National Dairy Council, Nickelodeon, United Way, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and The Cooper Institute.

Photos courtesy of NFL

NFL Play 60 THE NFL MOVEMENT FOR AN ACTIVE GENERATION

NFL PLAY 60 programs that are run by the NFL and its partners include:

NFL PLAY 60 Challenge is the NFL PLAY 60 in-school curriculum, created in partnership with the American Heart Association. The Challenge teaches educators and children to integrate health and fitness breaks into daily classroom lessons.

NFL PLAY 60 Super Bowl Contest allows young fans to explain how staying active helps them live better lives. The NFL judges entries and the winning child receives the ultimate prize – a trip to the Super Bowl where he or she runs the game ball out to an official to help kickoff the game. This year's winner is Patriots fan James Gale, who was chosen from more than 10,000 entrants. (Super Bowl XLV "Super Kid" Ava Childs is pictured with referee Walt Anderson.)

Fuel Up To PLAY 60 is an in-school program that encourages nutritious eating habits along with 60 minutes of daily physical activity. The program was founded by the National Dairy Council and the NFL, and is based on a mutual commitment to the health of the next generation.

Keep Gym In School is NFL Network's PLAY 60 program. It provides support as needed to upgrade facilities, hire certified physical education instructors, and supply equipment for PE classes.

Youth Football: NFL FLAG Football, NFL Punt, Pass and Kick, and **NFL Girls Flag Football** also are all part of the NFL PLAY 60 initiative.

NFL PLAY 60 comes to life in a prominent way during the NFL's key calendar events, which include the Super Bowl, Pro Bowl, Draft, Kickoff, and Thanksgiving. Each year, during the week leading up to the NFL Draft in New York City, the NFL holds a Youth Football Festival. Football's biggest names have embraced the NFL PLAY 60 campaign, among them the Saints' Drew Brees and the Cowboys' Jason Witten. For more information on PLAY 60 and its initiatives, visit NFLRUSH.com, the NFL's official website for kids.

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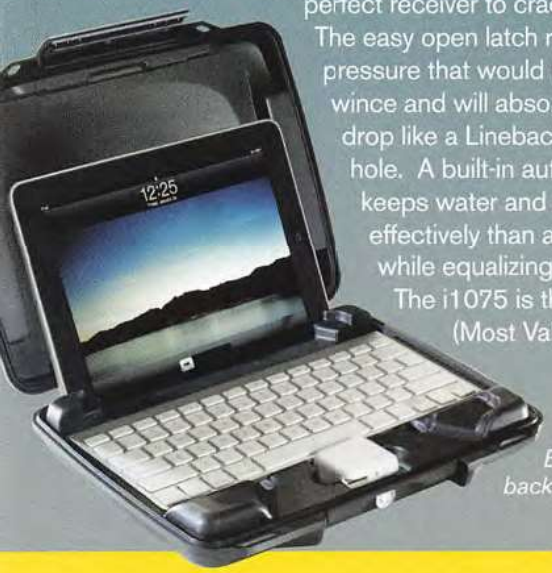

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David Draiklin

A better understanding of diversity and what unites us are the goals of the NFL's **One World program**.

One World Indianapolis was one of the many cultural and educational initiatives that focused on students during the lead-up to Super Bowl XLVI. It's based on Scholastic's widely acclaimed "One World: Connecting Communities, Cultures, and Classrooms" program.

Ten classrooms participated in a five-week curriculum designed to celebrate the diversity and heritage unique to Indianapolis. In addition to implementing the program's diversity-themed lesson plans, each classroom was paired with a school from another community through a pen pal relationship. The matches were designed to bring together students of varying backgrounds in order to break down racial barriers and to help them understand all they have in common.

Teachers could also participate in the One World curriculum by teaching the lesson plans and establishing their own pen pal relationships.

Students are meeting their pen pals for the first time at an event during Super Bowl Week, participating in workshops focused on cultural elements such as music, art, dance, and theater.

INDY GETS A YET

NFL Charities has donated $1 million on behalf of the youth of Indianapolis.

YOUTH EDUCATION ★ TOWN ★ INDIANAPOLIS

Funds from the Super Bowl Legacy Grant initiative, which started in 1993, have historically been used to construct after-school centers of enrichment called Youth Education Towns (YETs). These centers are designed and operated with programming aimed at positively impacting youth in at-risk neighborhoods.

As a lasting gift to the Super Bowl XLVI community, a LEED-certified, Youth Education Town has been established within the newly constructed Chase Near Eastside Legacy Center.

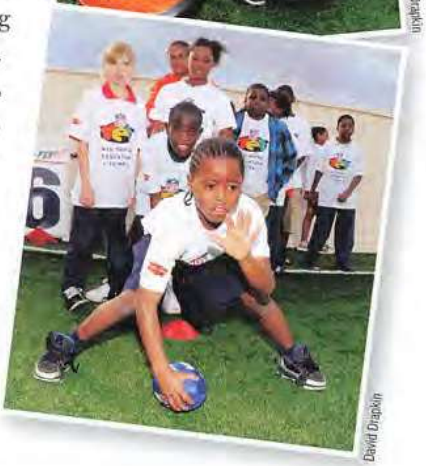
The 27,000-square-foot facility, housed on the Arsenal Technical High School campus, features a state-of-the-art fitness center as well as skills training and cultural programs for children and their families.

The NFL Charities contribution was used to construct the YET portion of the Legacy Center building, enabling the Super Bowl Host Committee and the local community to leverage an additional $10.3 million toward the construction of the Legacy Center, serving residents of all ages in the Near Eastside community.

To mark the occasion, current and former NFL players who have received NFL Charities and NFL Youth Football Fund grants within the past year are hosting a youth football clinic in the center's new gym. There will be a ribbon-cutting ceremony and a press conference where NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell and Colts owner Jim Irsay will announce the gift from NFL Charities. Also on hand will be representatives of local businesses and nonprofit organizations who contributed to the overall project.

Courtesy of NFL

David Draiklin


David Draiklin

THE LOCAL CHALLENGE

The NFL, American Heart Association, Indianapolis Colts, and Indianapolis Super Bowl Host Committee joined forces ahead of Super Bowl XLVI to raise awareness about the importance of health and wellness for school-aged children. The **NFL PLAY 60 Challenge – Indianapolis Super Bowl Edition** encouraged youth to be active by challenging teachers and students across the region to get an hour's worth of exercise every day for four weeks, giving them an opportunity to win some great Super Bowl prizes! The program was open to fifth and sixth graders.

One class won the Grand Prize: a visit from the Indianapolis Colts; many others won an invitation to attend Kids' Day at the NFL Experience. Participating classes also were eligible to win a $2,500 grant from NFL Charities and the American Heart Association to be used to purchase new athletic equipment or allocated toward in-school health and fitness programming.

KEEPING IT GREEN & CLEAN

Since 1993, the NFL has made it a priority to implement projects in each Super Bowl host community that address–and reduce–the **game's impact on the environment**.

This year's projects, developed in partnership with the Indianapolis Super Bowl Host Committee and a number of national, state, and local organizations, are designed to deal with the immediate environmental impact as well as leave a positive legacy in the local community.

To learn more about the NFL Environmental Program and its work at Super Bowl XLVI, contact program director Jack Groh via email at nflenvironment@aol.com or by phone at 401.952.0886.

Solid Waste Management and Recycling – Solid waste is being diverted from local landfills through recycling projects at major event venues, including Lucas Oil Stadium, the Indiana Convention Center, the NFL Super Bowl headquarters, and the Super Bowl XLVI Media Center.

Prepared Food Recovery – Extra prepared food from Super Bowl events is being collected and donated to community agencies in partnership with Second Helpings, a locally-based community kitchen and food rescue organization.

Materials Donation – All leftover, usable materials from Super Bowl events are being donated to nonprofit agencies, with priority going to those agencies serving the Indianapolis area.

Super Kids–Super Sharing: Sports Equipment & Book Donation Project
This project provides an opportunity for local school children to donate gently used books, sports equipment, and school supplies to children in need. Partners include the Indianapolis Colts, Martin University, and more than 130 public and private schools in the Greater Indianapolis area.

Courtesy of Indianapolis Super Bowl Host Committee

Climate Change Initiative

- Renewable power, provided by Green Mountain Energy, is being used to "green" the power usage at Lucas Oil Stadium for Super Bowl XLVI. Additional RECs (renewable energy credits) will be applied to energy usage at NFL Experience, the Super Bowl XLVI Media Center, the AFC and NFC team hotels, and the NFL Super Bowl headquarters.
- Almost 3,000 trees have been planted throughout Indianapolis as part of the Host Committee's Legacy Project. Additional tree plantings are planned for the spring to continue the overall "greening" of the Super Bowl host city.

Courtesy of Indianapolis Super Bowl Host Committee

Courtesy of Indianapolis Super Bowl Host Committee

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EMERGING BUSINESS PROGRAM

The NFL Emerging Business Program exemplified the power of collaboration as the NFL, Indianapolis Super Bowl Host Committee, and Emerging Business Committee led the charge to prepare the region's minority- and women-owned businesses for procurement opportunities available for Super Bowl XLVI and beyond.

These efforts included: hosting several workshops designed to prepare businesses to do Super Bowl business; the launch of a new program, Super Pitch Monday, in which businesses practiced interview techniques in preparation for their Super Bowl-related meetings; and the second year of the Emerging Business Challenge. In addition, more than 400 businesses were approved to be part of the Business Resource Guide, the program's online database.

Central to the program was the Playbook Workshop Series, organized with the help of the Kelley School of Business. These workshops were designed to educate, engage, and empower Indianapolis' minority- and women-owned small business community by focusing on innovation, strategic planning, and social media. The 14-month outreach initiative concluded this week with the Super Bowl XLVI Business Leadership Forum.

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TO CARE & TO CURE

For the third straight year, the NFL and NFL Players Association showed their support for National Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

The program, "A Crucial Catch: Annual Screening Saves Lives" is a collaboration with the American Cancer Society and reminds women 40 and older about the importance of having an annual mammogram.

Game-worn pink merchandise and footballs from NFL Breast Cancer Awareness Games—held throughout October—were auctioned at nfl.com/auction, with all proceeds benefiting the American Cancer Society and team charities.

National spokespeople for "A Crucial Catch" were Cardinals wide receiver Larry Fitzgerald, Tanya Snyder (wife of Redskins owner Dan Snyder), and Susie Spanos (wife of Chargers president Dean Spanos). Fitzgerald lost his mother to the disease, and many of his charitable efforts now focus on breast cancer awareness. Snyder and Spanos battled breast cancer and now advocate in support of research and fundraising.

The NFL and ACS again extended the program to the youth and high school levels. With the help of USA Football, Eagles head coach Andy Reid sent a note to every youth and high school football coach across the country offering ideas on how schools and teams could "go pink" to show support for the cause. Reid's late mother, Elizabeth, was a radiologist who treated many breast cancer patients, and his mother-in-law, Virginia Garrett, passed away from breast cancer.

Fans can visit NFL.com/pink to learn more about the campaign and the youth and high school football initiative, as well as important breast cancer detection information, prevention tips, and how to participate in their local American Cancer Society Making Strides Against Breast Cancer walk.

Gail Burton/AP Images

Larry Fitzgerald

Gerald Herbert/AP Images

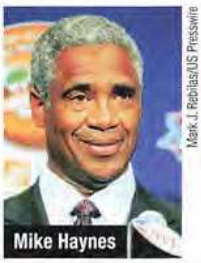
KEEPING A BOND WITH THE PAST

PLAYER CARE FOUNDATION

Created in 2007, the NFL Player Care Foundation is an independent organization dedicated to helping retired players improve their quality of life. It has assisted more than 375 former players by granting $3.75 million in financial assistance and in excess of $2.5 million in research grants. The PCF supports numerous programs to help retired players, including the NFL Joint Replacement and Spine Treatment programs, cardiovascular and prostate screenings, Morehouse Partnership, neurological care, and monetary grants to qualified NFL alumni who are experiencing financial hardships. For more information on their efforts, visit the PCF website at www.nflplayercare.com.

STATS OF IMPORTANCE!

In support of National Prostate Cancer Awareness Month, the American Urological Association Foundation and the NFL teamed up throughout September to educate men about prostate health with the "Know Your Stats" campaign. The initiative is focused on turning awareness into action by encouraging men to know their risks and obtain important information regarding their health.


Mike Haynes

Mark J. Rebilas/US Presswire

Cancer survivor and Pro Football Hall of Famer Mike Haynes partnered with the AUA Foundation to drive home the message of prostate health awareness, an effort aided by more than 500 participating hospitals across the nation.

"I'm lucky to be able to spread the message with the AUA Foundation and NFL by encouraging men to take charge of their prostate health and to stay in the game for life," he said. "We're calling on all men to play defense with their health and to start the discussion with their doctor today."

One in six men will be diagnosed in his lifetime and more than 240,000 U.S. men were diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2011. The AUA recommends men get a baseline PSA test at age 40 and talk with their doctors to create a prostate health plan based on lifestyle and family history.

In 2007, the AUA Foundation began conducting prostate cancer screenings for retired NFL players. For more information about prostate cancer, visit KnowYourStats.org.

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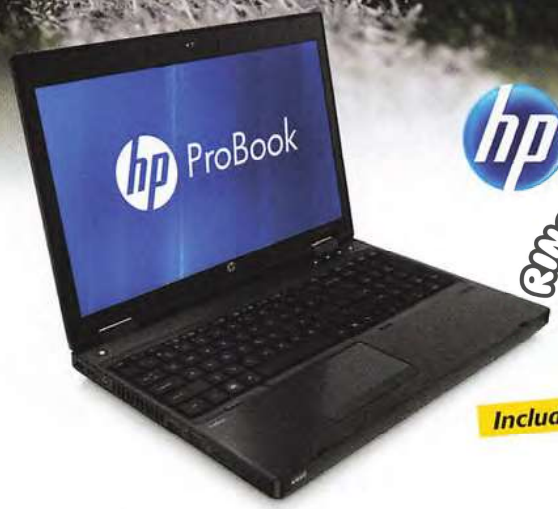

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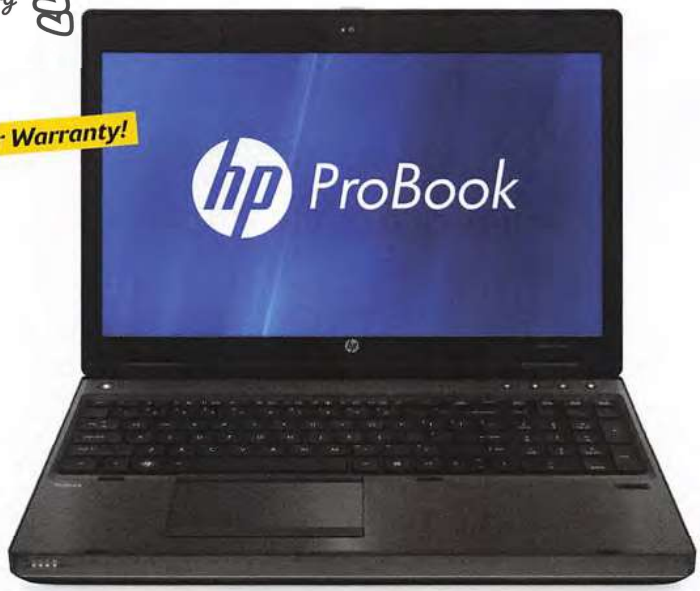

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U.S. HEROES

With its new **Salute to Service campaign**, the NFL is building upon its long history of honoring veterans and active duty members of the military.

The campaign is designed to unify and elevate the extensive military appreciation work of the NFL and its clubs. Throughout November, teams designated home games as special military appreciation games, during which they displayed "Salute to Service" banners and held ceremonies to honor the service and sacrifice of our nation's troops.

In addition, the league and its official military appreciation sponsor —United Services Automobile Association (USAA)—launched the inaugural "Salute to Service" Award to recognize NFL team representatives who demonstrate an exemplary commitment to honoring and supporting the military community.

Dave Gailey

Anthony Muñoz, Matt Millen, and Merril Hoge with members of the U.S. Air Force.

Sardy Huffaker/AP Images

The league has a long history of supporting America's armed services, including a partnership of more than 45 years with the USO. Since 1966, active and retired NFL players and coaches have teamed with the USO on visits to locations such as Somalia, Bosnia, Italy, Japan, and Kuwait.

In March 2011, Merril Hoge, Matt Millen, and Anthony Muñoz traveled to the Persian Gulf on an NFL-USO tour to meet and greet members of the U.S. military. Four months later, Texans head coach Gary Kubiak, Cardinals head coach Ken Whisenhunt, former Saints/Colts head coach Jim E. Mora and his son, UCLA head coach Jim L. Mora, made a similar trip.

Another connection between the NFL and the military is the NFL-Tillman Military Scholar Award, an annual scholarship awarded to an individual who exemplifies Pat Tillman's enduring legacy of service. The second annual award was presented in December to Navy Petty Officer Third Class D'Onior Felton of Clarksdale, Miss. Felton, currently a medical student at George Washington University, earned her undergraduate degree at the University of Maryland while serving on active duty.

The scholarship is part of the Tillman Military Scholars program established by the Pat Tillman Foundation. More information is available at pattillmanfoundation.org. Fans can find out more about the NFL's commitment to the military and veterans at NFL.com/salute.

Charles Rex Arbogast/AP Images

Hispanic Heritage Month (Sept. 15 - Oct. 15) was again recognized by the NFL and its teams with a series of special events at every stadium, including nationally televised games that took place in Indianapolis and Dallas.

Also as part of the 2011 celebration, the NFL teamed with the Hispanic Heritage Foundation (HHF) and Bud Light to launch the NFL Hispanic Heritage Leadership Awards to honor the efforts of Hispanic leaders in each NFL market. Recipients were recognized in-stadium and selected an organization serving the local Hispanic community to receive a $2,000 donation.

TIME TO BE A DESIGNATED DRIVER

Shortly after the start of the 2011 season, **Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD)** and the NFL announced the addition of several new teams to their game-day designated driver program. The Cardinals, Broncos, and Chargers joined with the four flagship members – the Bills, Bears, Raiders, and Eagles – who initiated programs in 2010.

"As a mother whose daughter was killed by a drunk driver, the idea of designating a sober driver is very close to my heart," said MADD national president Jan Withers. "MADD is thrilled to be expanding our game-day program partnership with these NFL teams to help raise awareness about the importance of planning ahead for a safe way home."

The program enhances existing designated driver programs with a pregame MADD presence in stadium parking lots, distribution of information cards throughout the stadiums, and audio PSAs. For more info, visit madd.org.

THE HEADLINES...AND MORE

From acts of heroism to remembering those who left us—and everything in between—2011 gave us plenty to look back upon.

Dan Moses/mandoses.com

A Heroic Climb

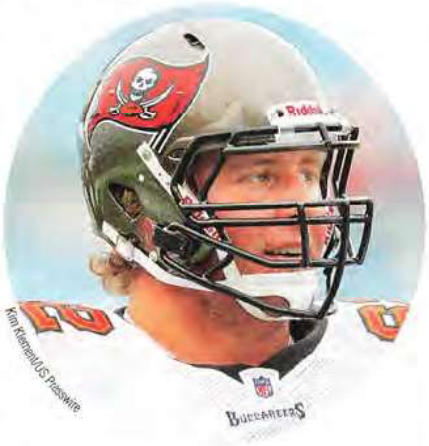
An NFL contingent that included former Patriots linebacker Tedy Bruschi, new Rams head coach Jeff Fisher, and former NFL tight end Chad Lewis joined four Wounded Warriors to climb Mount Kilimanjaro last May. The team, affectionately known as Team Hard Target, scaled the largest mountain in Africa to raise awareness and enlist aid for the Wounded Warrior Project (WWP), a nonprofit organization whose mission is to honor and empower those injured in service to their country. The climb launched WWP's "Believe in Heroes" campaign.

"The amazing thing was watching the wounded warriors doing what I was doing," said Lewis. "It was an honor and a reminder of the real heroes among us."

Being There to Help

Chiefs tight end Leonard Pope and Buccaneers offensive guard Ted Larsen (below) performed heroism of a different kind. In June, Pope saved a 6-year-old boy from drowning in a swimming pool while visiting a friend in his hometown in Americus, Ga.

"My heart dropped. It could have been any child...I just knew I had to do something," Pope told ESPN. "I wasn't waiting on anyone else to try to pull him out. I just felt because I have kids of my own (two young daughters) I would want someone to do that for my kids, also."



Kim Klement/US Presswire

Last April, Larsen rescued teens whose kayak overturned in the Gulf of Mexico. He responded to a Coast Guard distress call while fishing near Honeymoon Island and found two people clinging to a kayak while a third was trapped in it. He pulled them aboard his boat and brought them to safety.

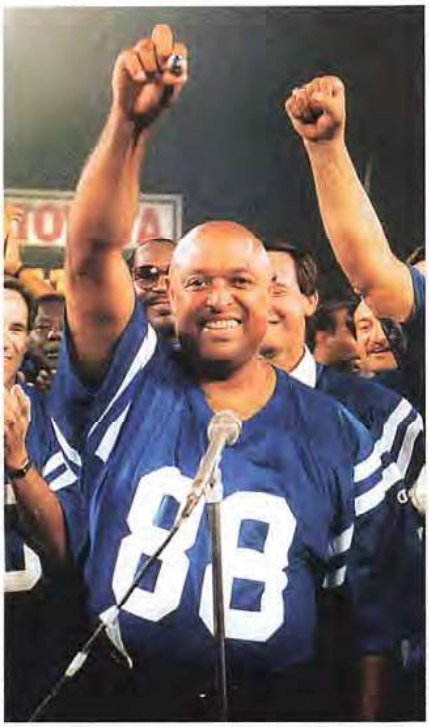
"It could have been a big deal," he said. "I just felt it was a good thing to do."

Kyle Terada/US Presswire

School and State Bragging Rights

When the 2011 NFL season began, the University of Miami led the nation's colleges with 42 players on league rosters, a list that included 49ers Pro Bowl running back Frank Gore (left). The Hurricanes were followed closely by Southern California (41) and Texas (40). The honor for the high school with the most players in the NFL also came from Florida: St. Thomas Aquinas of Ft. Lauderdale had eight graduates in the league.

Miami was the hometown for the most NFL players (27), while the best-represented state was California with 226 players. Louisiana, however, led all states in terms of NFL players per capita (1 in every 85,535 residents).



Ted Mathias/AP Images

Saying Good-bye to SB Standouts

The game lost several prominent figures in the past year, including longtime Raiders owner Al Davis, who died in October at age 82 (see Gil Brandt's tribute on page 151).

Others with Super Bowl ties who passed away in 2011 included Hall of Fame tight end John Mackey (above), who made 331 career catches, 38 for TDs, and had a 75-yard TD grab in the Colts' Super Bowl V win.

"[John] redefined the tight end position," said NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell. "He was a courageous advocate for fellow players as head of the NFL Players Association, and he worked closely with our office on many issues, including as the first president of the NFL Youth Football Fund."

Bubba Smith, a teammate of Mackey's on that Super Bowl V team, passed away in August. The No. 1 pick in the 1967 draft, Smith played for the Colts, Raiders, and Oilers before embarking on an acting career.

Also lost were kicker Don Chandler, who set a Super Bowl record with four field goals for the Packers in Super Bowl II, and safety Dave Duerson, who won Super Bowl titles with the Bears (XX) and Giants (XXV).

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NFL

New England Patriots

SCOUTING REPORT

Statistical Leaders

Passing	Comp-Att	Pct	Yds	TD	Int	Rtng
Tom Brady	401-611	65.6	5235	39	12	105.6
Brian Hoyer	1-1	100	22	0	0	118.8

Rushing	Att	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
BenJarvus Green-Ellis	181	667	3.7	18	11
Stevan Ridley	87	441	5.1	33	1
Danny Woodhead	77	351	4.6	12	1
Tom Brady	43	109	2.5	13	3
Kevin Faulk	17	57	3.4	9	0
Shane Vereen	15	57	3.8	19	1

Receiving	No	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
Wes Welker	122	1569	12.9	99	9
Rob Gronkowski	90	1327	14.7	52	17
Aaron Hernandez	79	910	11.5	46	7
Deion Branch	51	702	13.8	63	5
Danny Woodhead	18	157	8.7	16	0
Chad Ochocinco	15	276	18.4	53	1
BenJarvus Green-Ellis	9	159	17.7	53	0

Defense	Tackles	Assists	Total	Sacks	FR	PD
Jerod Mayo	67	36	103	1.0	0	4
Devin McCourty	71	23	94	0.0	0	12
Kyle Arrington	56	27	83	0.0	1	13
Vince Wilfork	45	29	74	3.5	2	3
James Ihedigbo	50	22	72	0.0	0	1
Patrick Chung	39	28	67	1.0	0	4
Rob Ninkovich	46	16	62	6.5	2	4
Andre Carter	37	22	59	10.0	0	1
Kyle Love	30	25	55	3.0	1	0
Brandon Spikes	36	15	51	0.0	0	1
Gary Guyton	33	13	46	0.0	0	1

Interceptions	No	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
Kyle Arrington	7	92	13.1	28	0
Jerod Mayo	2	4	2.0	2	0
Devin McCourty	2	38	19.0	38	0

Four others with two: Antwaun Molden, Sterling Moore, Rob Ninkovich, Vince Wilfork

Kick Returns	Ret	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
Danny Woodhead	20	437	21.9	37	0
Julian Edelman	12	284	23.7	37	0

Punt Returns	Ret	FC	Avg	Long	TD
Julian Edelman	28	7	10.7	72	1

Punting	No	Avg	Net	Tchbk	In/20	Long
Zoltan Mesko	57	46.5	41.5	3	24	65

Field Goals	Total	1-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50+
Stephen Gostkowski	28-33	1-1	12-13	5-6	9-11	1-2

Offense

No	Player	Pos
83	Wes Welker	WR
72	Matt Light	LT
70	Logan Mankins	LG
63	Dan Connolly	C
54	Brian Waters	RG
76	Sebastian Vollmer	RT
87	Rob Gronkowski	TE
84	Deion Branch	WR
12	Tom Brady	QB
42	BenJarvus Green-Ellis	RB
39	Danny Woodhead	RB

Defense

No	Player	Pos
94	Shaun Ellis	DE
75	Vince Wilfork	DT
74	Kyle Love	DT
95	Mark Anderson	DE
50	Rob Ninkovich	LB
51	Jerod Mayo	LB
55	Brandon Spikes	LB
32	Devin McCourty	LCB
25	Patrick Chung	S
44	James Ihedigbo	S
24	Kyle Arrington	RCB

Numerical Roster

No	Player	Pos
3	Stephen Gostkowski	K
8	Brian Hoyer	QB
10	Tiquan Underwood	WR
11	Julian Edelman	WR
12	Tom Brady	QB
14	Zoltan Mesko	P
15	Ryan Mallett	QB
18	Matthew Slater	WR
22	Stevan Ridley	RB
23	Nate Jones	DB
24	Kyle Arrington	CB
25	Patrick Chung	S
27	Antwaun Molden	CB
29	Sterling Moore	DB
31	Sergio Brown	S
32	Devin McCourty	CB
33	Kevin Faulk	RB
34	Shane Vereen	RB
36	Lousaka Polite	FB
39	Danny Woodhead	RB
41	Malcolm Williams	DB
42	BenJarvus Green-Ellis	RB
44	James Ihedigbo	S
48	Danny Aiken	LS
50	Rob Ninkovich	LB
51	Jerod Mayo	LB
52	Dane Fletcher	LB
54	Brian Waters	G
55	Brandon Spikes	LB
58	Tracy White	LB
59	Gary Guyton	LB
61	Marcus Cannon	OL
62	Ryan Wendell	C
63	Dan Connolly	OL
64	Donald Thomas	OL
65	Nick McDonald	OL
70	Logan Mankins	G
71	Brandon Deaderick	DL
72	Matt Light	T
74	Kyle Love	DL
75	Vince Wilfork	DT
76	Sebastian Vollmer	T
77	Nate Solder	T
81	Aaron Hernandez	TE
83	Wes Welker	WR
84	Deion Branch	WR
85	Chad Ochocinco	WR
87	Rob Gronkowski	TE
90	Niko Koutouvides	LB
94	Shaun Ellis	DE
95	Mark Anderson	DE
97	Ron Brace	DL
98	Gerard Warren	DL

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PATRIOTS HAVE THE SUPER BOWL'S NUMBER

Throwing for over 5,000 yards during the regular season was a mighty achievement, but Tom Brady is more pumped to be back in the Super Bowl.

Greg M. Cooper/US Presswire

The story hasn't changed, only the Roman numerals. The New England Patriots are what they've been for more than a decade – a dominant team defined by an explosive passing game and excellent coaching.

And although it has been four years since they last played for the Vince Lombardi Trophy, they are quite familiar with the task at hand, making their fifth Super Bowl appearance since 2001 and seventh in the history of the franchise.

They also are quite motivated, after missing the postseason once and not winning a game in their two playoff showings since losing Super Bowl XLII to—you guessed it—the New York Giants.

"You lose a few playoff games and it's a very bitter way to end a season," says quarterback Tom Brady. "It sits on your mind for quite a long time."

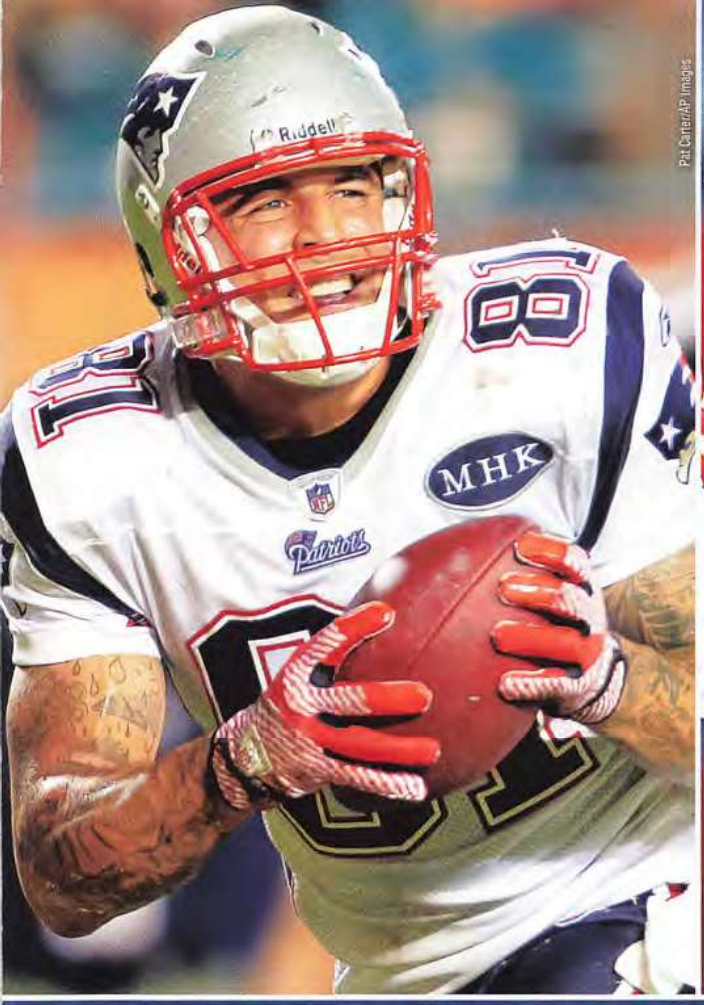
On everyone's mind right now, however, are this year's impressive playoff wins. Brady tied an NFL postseason record with six touchdown passes in the 45-10 divisional-round romp over the Broncos. And while his stats were a bit more modest in the title game against the Ravens (22 of 36, 239 yards), he delivered in the clutch to earn a ticket to Indianapolis.

Those performances show that this is a team that goes as far as Brady, a two-time Super Bowl MVP, takes it. On the sideline, the Patriots are guided by one of the great coaches in league history, Bill Belichick, who ranks 10th on the NFL's career list for victories and has significant Super Bowl success.

They are the constants who this year set a league record for career wins by a quarterback-head coach combination, with that number now at 124.

Look at New England's roster and you'll see that Brady's supporting cast and Belichick's assistants have changed through the years, but the end results don't. And that's primarily because of the consistent greatness of Brady, who became the third quarterback in league history to reach 5,000 passing yards in a season. He set the tone by opening the year with a 500-yard performance in a win at Miami.

Tight end Rob Gronkowski's description of Brady after his performance against the Broncos still holds true: "On fire … that's who he is."



Pat Carter/AP Images

Geoff Burke/US Presswire

Versatile tight end Aaron Hernandez (left) fits the Patriots' profile, while veteran Logan Mankins is considered one of the finest offensive guards in franchise history.

OFFENSE

Thanks to Brady's 5,235 yards through the air, the Patriots ranked second in the NFL in passing offense. He also threw 39 touchdown passes with only 12 interceptions, and helped the team be both explosive and efficient: the Patriots ranked third in the NFL with a plus-17 turnover differential.

When Brady is at his best, no defense is going to stop him. He will devour the blitz, his 34-year-old legs still possessing the ability to move away from pressure and find the "hot" receiver.

Wes Welker is often that guy. He led the league with 122 catches and finished second in yards, amassing a franchise-record 1,569. Trying to take him away is a task at which most opponents fail miserably. Despite his small stature, he is particularly effective near the goal line and this year hauled in nine touchdowns.

Deion Branch (51 receptions, five TDs) doesn't have the quickness he possessed when he won MVP honors in Super Bowl XXXIX, but he still knows how to locate openings in zone coverage and has the same sort of chemistry with Brady that Welker enjoys.

But the Patriots have more than enough weapons in their passing game, thanks to the explosive tight end duo of Gronkowski and Aaron Hernandez. Making them even tougher to cover is the way the Patriots deftly move them around the formation to create coverage mismatches and also draw coverage away from their other pass-catchers.

The ultra-powerful Gronkowski made 90 receptions and set NFL records for a tight end with 1,327 receiving yards and 17 touchdown catches. He has become one of the game's best red-zone targets, using his remarkable combination of size, strength, and athleticism to consistently get open in tight spaces. He's also a devastating blocker.

Hernandez, who functions as much as a wide receiver as he does a tight end, had 79 catches for 910 yards with seven touchdowns. The Patriots, who specialize in multi-purpose roles for players, also use him as a running back on occasion.

The Patriots are not a strong rushing team, though their short passing attack basically serves the same purpose. They use multiple backs, primarily BenJarvus Green-Ellis, Danny Woodhead, and rookie Stevan Ridley, who combined for better than 1,400 yards and averaged 4.2 yards per carry. Green-Ellis, who has never had a fumble in his career, is a good power back who will see the ball near the goal line. He ran for 11 touchdowns and was particularly effective against the Ravens, rushing for 68 yards and the team's first TD. Ridley has displayed explosiveness in brief appearances, while Woodhead led the group with 18 receptions.

Injuries caused the Patriots' offensive line to use five starting combinations through the final six games of the regular season. The only member of the group to start all 16 games was veteran right guard Brian Waters, a key free agent pick-up from Kansas City.

More often, they've successfully mixed and matched players to complement Pro Bowlers like Logan Mankins (who started the first 13 games at left guard, then briefly switched to left tackle) and Matt Light. The list includes tackles Sebastian Vollmer and rookie Nate Solder, and centers Dan Connolly, Ryan Wendell, and Nick McDonald.

No matter how they've been shuffled, the results have been impressive and this group has played its best down the stretch. New England has reached the 20-point plateau in every game but one this season, and Brady has again been afforded outstanding protection, being sacked just 32 times despite throwing more than 600 passes.

AFC CHAMPIONSHIP GAME
Patriots 23
Ravens 20

In a riveting clash that wasn't decided until the final seconds, the Patriots prevailed when Billy Cundiff's potential game-tying 32-yard field goal hooked left. The win puts Tom Brady in the Super Bowl for the fifth time, matching Hall of Famer John Elway's record for most appearances by a quarterback.

Neither team led by more than seven points and the Patriots didn't go ahead for good until Brady dove over center for a 1-yard TD with 11:29 to play. New England's defense then stopped the Ravens three times in Patriots territory—first on Brandon Spikes' interception at the 31-yard line, then on downs at the 33, and finally on the missed field goal after Baltimore had marched 65 yards to the 14.

BenJarvus Green-Ellis scored the game's first TD, his 7-yard burst up the middle handing New England a 10-3 lead. Stephen Gostkowski's third field goal of the game made it 16-10 for the Patriots, before a nifty 29-yard catch-and-run TD by Torrey Smith put the Ravens in front. Cundiff's 39-yard field goal pushed the lead to 20-16.

But the Patriots answered on their next possession, with Brady finishing the 63-yard drive himself by going over the top on fourth-and-goal.

2011 Patriots Results (15-3)

Opponent	Score	W/L
Dolphins	38-24	W
CHARGERS	35-21	W
Bills	31-34	L
Raiders	31-19	W
JETS	30-21	W
COWBOYS	20-16	W
Steelers	17-25	L
GIANTS	20-24	L
Jets	37-16	W
CHIEFS	34-3	W
Eagles	38-20	W
COLTS	31-24	W
Redskins	34-27	W
Broncos	41-23	W
DOLPHINS	27-24	W
BILLS	49-21	W
AFC Playoffs		
BRONCOS	45-10	W
RAVENS	23-20	W

Steve Mitchell/US Presswire

On an offensive line that's been forced to improvise, guard Brian Waters has been a constant, starting every game.

DEFENSE

Talk about bending but not breaking. The Patriots ranked second-to-last in the league in both total defense and pass defense, yet were 15th in points allowed and No. 2 with 34 takeaways (including 23 interceptions, second-most in the league).

They manage to generate the most pressure when playing coverage that causes the quarterback to hesitate just long enough for pass-rushers to get to him. That proved particularly true in their divisional round win over the Broncos when they racked up five sacks.

The best part of the Patriots' defense is its line. Vince Wilfork leads the way with his versatility to play tackle or end, depending if the unit is in a 4-3 or 3-4 formation. He continues to be one of the most disruptive defensive tackles in the league and was the difference-maker in the AFC title-game win.

Kyle Love (inside) and Shaun Ellis (outside) have done a nice job, and though losing end Andre Carter to a season-ending injury was a blow, Mark Anderson has performed well in his place, registering 10 sacks.

The Pats finished a pedestrian 17th in the league against the run. But that stat could be misleading, since two of their top run-stuffers, linebacker Brandon Spikes and safety Patrick Chung, returned from injuries in time for the playoffs and made a huge impact in the wins over Denver and Baltimore.

Middle linebacker Jerod Mayo continues to be a tackling machine—he had a team-high 103 stops during the regular season—and began playing some of his best football in the latter part of the year. Outside linebacker/defensive end Rob Ninkovich has superb instincts and is a consistent playmaker.

Right cornerback Kyle Arrington shared the NFL lead with seven interceptions, but the Patriots have shown vulnerability in their secondary. One quick fix would be for cornerback Devin McCourty to return to the form that earned him Pro Bowl honors in 2010.

The team does plenty of mixing and matching at the other secondary spots. James Ihedigbo is regularly paired with Chung at safety but also has shared time with McCourty, wide receiver/special-teamer Matthew Slater, and Sterling Moore.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Stephen Gostkowski continues to be a reliable kicker. This season, he connected on 28 of his 33 field goal attempts, including 10-of-13 from 40 yards and out.

The Pats have an outstanding punter in Zoltan Mesko, who has been integral in their efforts to gain favorable field position. Of Mesko's 57 punts, 24 pinned opponents inside their own 20. He also did not have a punt blocked during the regular season.

Julian Edelman has been strong on returns, averaging 23.7 yards on kickoffs and 10.7 on punts.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Considering that the Patriots roared into the playoffs with the look of one of the NFL's best teams—they'll bring a 10-game winning streak to Indianapolis—it's hard to imagine it would all come to a sudden halt in the Super Bowl.

So what if the defense allows the opposition to move the ball too freely at times. Brady is performing at such an elevated level—both physically and mentally—that even the high-flying Giants are going to have trouble stopping him for four quarters.

While the Patriots would like to score early to take the pressure off their defense, they've looked surprisingly comfortable this season while rallying from some pretty sizeable deficits (17-0 at halftime to Miami; 21-0 in the second quarter to Buffalo).

As usual, Brady will throw often to Welker, and Branch is likely to see his share of looks as well. However, expect the bulk of Brady's passes to go to Gronkowski and/or Hernandez, because no opponent has had the coverage answers to take away both of them. The way the Giants elect to defend them could be the telling storyline of the game.

New England's defense won't be asked to stop Eli Manning and company, just slow him down and force a turnover or two. That's what they did against Baltimore. Belichick, Brady, and the high-powered offense are confident they can handle the rest.

This will be a test to see whether it will be a great offense, or a defense now playing at the top of its game, that rules the NFL this season. The Patriots were able to overcome the Ravens' much-celebrated unit, but this will be a tougher challenge. Then again, Belichick—coaching in his eighth Super Bowl (fifth as a head coach)—is always up for a challenge.

~Vic Carucci, Cleveland Browns Senior Editor

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Robert Kraft Chairman & CEO

Robert Kraft announced his intention to bring New England a championship the day he bought the Patriots in 1994. In the 18 seasons since, he has made good on that pledge several times over, as the Patriots have won an unrivaled three Super Bowls, six conference titles, and 11 AFC East division championships.

During the Kraft era, the Patriots also own the NFL's best win-loss record (212-104) and the highest winning percentages in both the regular season (.671) and postseason (.679). With this year's AFC title, Kraft becomes the first owner in NFL history to advance to the Super Bowl on six occasions. Since 1994, no other NFL franchise has made more than four Super Bowl appearances.

Under Kraft's leadership, the Patriots have transformed from one of the league's worst clubs to one of its most successful franchises in history. Kraft has served on many of the NFL's most prominent committees and is regarded as one of the league's most influential owners. In 2011, he was principally involved in the negotiations with both the NFLPA and the league's broadcast partners, rewarding football fans with deals that will allow football to be enjoyed for another decade without interruption.

At the press conference to announce the 10-year agreement with the NFLPA to end the NFL lockout, Indianapolis Colts center Jeff Saturday commented on Kraft's role in the negotiations by saying, "Without him, this deal does not get done. He is a man who helped us save football and we're so [grateful] for that. We're [grateful] for his family and for the opportunity he presented to get this deal done."

Later in the year, in his role as chairman of the broadcast committee, Kraft helped negotiate the most lucrative broadcasting contract in the history of sports with long-term extensions of the CBS, FOX, and NBC contracts, as well as extensions of the broadcasting agreements with DirecTV and Comcast.

Kraft is the founder, chairman, and CEO of The Kraft Group, based in Foxborough, Mass. The Kraft Group is the holding company of the Kraft family's many businesses, with interests concentrated in six areas: manufacturing of paper and packaging, international distribution of forest products, sports and entertainment, real estate development, private equity investing, and philanthropy.

He began his business career with the Rand-Whitney Group, Inc. of Worcester, Mass., a company that converts paper into packaging for various industries. He later acquired the company. In 1972, he founded International Forest Products, a trader of paper commodities that now does business in more than 91 countries.

The Krafts have been one of New England's most philanthropic families, donating more than $100 million in support of local charities.

Elise Amendola/AP Images

Bob Kraft proudly holds the Lamar Hunt Trophy after the Patriots defeated the Baltimore Ravens to win the AFC championship – the sixth under his ownership – and advance to Super Bowl XLVI.

New England Patriots Team Officials

ROBERT KRAFT
Chairman & CEO

JONATHAN KRAFT
President

BRIAN BILELLO
Vice President of Retail Operations

ROBIN BOUDREAU
Vice President of Human Resources

MARK BRIGGS
Chief Operating Officer of Team Ops Security

DON BROCHER
Equipment Manager

NICK CASERIO
Director of Player Personnel

PAT CURLEY
Vice President of Information Technology

JIMMY DEE
Video Director

JENNIFER FERRON
Senior Vice President of Marketing & Brand Development

JESSICA GELMAN
Vice President of Customer Marketing & Strategy

ROBYN GLASER
Senior Advisor

STACEY JAMES
Vice President of Media & Community Relations

FRED KIRSCH
Publisher/Editor-in-Chief & Director of Interactive Media

MURRAY KOHL
Vice President of Sales

JOSH KRAFT
President of New England Patriots Charitable Foundation

RICHARD MILLER
Director of Research

DAN MURPHY
Vice President of Stadium Business Development & External Affairs

BERJ NAJARIAN
Director of Football/ Head Coach Administration

JAMES NOLAN
Senior Vice President of Finance, Administrative & Operations

DAVID PEARLSTEIN
Vice President of Marketing Integration & Events

DAVID WHEELER
Vice President of Food & Beverage

FLOYD REESE
Senior Football Advisor

MATT SMITH
Executive Producer of Broadcast Production

TRACY SORMANTI
Director of Cheerleaders

ANDRE TIPPETT
Executive Director of Community Affairs

JIM WHALEN
Head Athletic Trainer

JIM WILSON
Vice President of Finance

Bill Belichick Head Coach

Bill Belichick, who is completing his 37th season as an NFL coach and 12th at the helm of the Patriots, is the only head coach in NFL history to win three Super Bowl championships in a four-year span.

He accomplished that feat by directing the Patriots, who had never previously won a Super Bowl title, to victories in Super Bowls XXXVI, XXXVIII, and XXXIX. During the 2003-04 seasons, Belichick led the team to 21 straight victories—including the postseason—a feat unprecedented in NFL annals. In 2007, he became the first NFL head coach to guide his team to a 16-0 regular-season record. During that season, the Patriots set all-time NFL records for points scored (589), touchdowns (75), and point differential (+315).

Under his leadership, the Patriots own a record of 155-58 (.728), which includes nine AFC East division crowns, and are making their fifth Super Bowl appearance. With a victory in Super Bowl XLVI, he will join the Steelers' Chuck Noll as the only head coaches to win four Super Bowl titles.

Starting with 2001, Belichick's teams have enjoyed 11 consecutive winning seasons, an accomplishment topped by only one other coach during the Super Bowl era (Tom Landry, who led the Cowboys to 16 straight winning seasons from 1970-85). He earned Associated Press NFL Coach of the Year honors in 2003 and 2007.

Belichick entered the coaching ranks in 1975 as a staff assistant with the Colts and then moved on to positions with the Lions and Broncos. In 1979, he joined the Giants as a defensive assistant and special teams coach, launching a 12-year stay that included two Super Bowl titles (XXI and XXV) when he was the club's defensive coordinator. His first head coaching position came with the Cleveland Browns from 1991-95, a tenure that included a playoff berth in 1994. He then served as an assistant with the Patriots and the Jets before being named the head coach of the Patriots on Jan. 27, 2000.

Born April 16, 1952, Belichick was a standout athlete who lettered in football, lacrosse, and squash at Wesleyan University, where he earned his bachelor's degree in economics. His father, Steve, coached for 33 years at the Naval Academy.

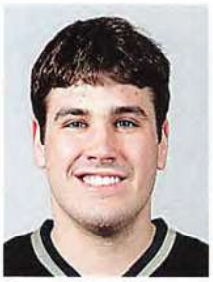
Assistants — Responsibilities

JOSH BOYER	Defensive Backs
MOSES CABRERA	Assistant Strength and Conditioning
IVAN FEARS	Running Backs
BRIAN FERENTZ	Tight Ends
BRIAN FLORES	Defensive Assistant
GEORGE GODSEY	Offensive Assistant
PATRICK GRAHAM	Linebackers
PEPPER JOHNSON	Defensive Line
JOSH McDANIELS	Offensive Assistant
HAROLD NASH	Strength and Conditioning
BILL O'BRIEN	Offensive Coordinator/Quarterbacks
SCOTT O'BRIEN	Special Teams
CHAD O'SHEA	Receivers
MATT PATRICIA	Safeties
DANTE SCARNECCHIA	Assistant Head Coach/Offensive Line

Patriots Alphabetical Roster

No	Player	Pos	Ht	Wt	Birth Date	NFL Exp	College
48	Aiken, Danny	LS	6-4	252	8/28/88	R	Virginia
95	Anderson, Mark	DE	6-4	255	5/26/83	6	Alabama
24	Arrington, Kyle	CB	5-10	196	8/12/86	3	Hofstra
97	Brace, Ron	DL	6-3	330	12/18/86	3	Boston College
12	Brady, Tom	QB	6-4	225	8/3/77	12	Michigan
84	Branch, Deion	WR	5-9	195	7/18/79	10	Louisville
31	Brown, Sergio	S	6-2	210	5/22/88	2	Notre Dame
61	Cannon, Marcus	OL	6-5	358	5/6/88	R	TCU
25	Chung, Patrick	S	5-11	212	8/19/87	3	Oregon
63	Connolly, Dan	OL	6-4	313	9/2/82	6	Southeast Missouri
71	Deaderick, Brandon	DL	6-4	305	8/19/87	2	Alabama
11	Edelman, Julian	WR	5-10	198	5/22/86	3	Kent State
94	Ellis, Shaun	DE	6-5	290	6/24/77	12	Tennessee
33	Faulk, Kevin	RB	5-8	202	6/5/76	13	LSU
52	Fletcher, Dane	LB	6-2	244	9/14/86	2	Montana State
3	Gostkowski, Stephen	K	6-1	215	1/28/84	6	Memphis
42	Green-Ellis, BenJarvus	RB	5-11	215	7/2/85	4	Mississippi
87	Gronkowski, Rob	TE	6 6	265	5/14/89	2	Arizona
59	Guyton, Gary	LB	6-3	245	11/14/85	4	Georgia Tech
81	Hernandez, Aaron	TE	6-1	245	11/6/89	2	Florida
8	Hoyer, Brian	QB	6-2	215	10/13/85	3	Michigan State
44	Ihedigbo, James	S	6-1	215	12/3/83	5	Massachusetts
23	Jones, Nate	DB	5-10	185	6/15/82	8	Rutgers
90	Koutouvides, Niko	LB	6-2	238	3/25/81	8	Purdue
72	Light, Matt	T	6-4	305	6/23/78	11	Purdue
74	Love, Kyle	DL	6-1	310	11/18/86	2	Mississippi State
15	Mallett, Ryan	QB	6-6	238	6/5/88	R	Arkansas
70	Mankins, Logan	G	6-4	310	3/10/82	7	Fresno State
51	Mayo, Jerod	LB	6-1	245	2/23/86	4	Tennessee
32	McCourty, Devin	CB	5-10	193	8/13/87	2	Rutgers
65	McDonald, Nick	OL	6-4	316	6/27/87	2	Grand Valley State
14	Mesko, Zoltan	P	6-5	231	3/16/86	2	Michigan
27	Molden, Antwaun	CB	6-1	198	1/23/85	4	Eastern Kentucky
29	Moore, Sterling	DB	5-10	205	2/3/90	R	SMU
50	Ninkovich, Rob	LB	6-2	255	2/1/84	6	Purdue
85	Ochocinco, Chad	WR	6-1	192	1/9/78	11	Oregon State
36	Polite, Lousaka	FB	6-0	245	9/14/81	8	Pittsburgh
22	Ridley, Stevan	RB	5-11	225	1/27/89	R	LSU
18	Slater, Matthew	WR	6-0	200	9/9/85	4	UCLA
77	Solder, Nate	T	6-8	319	4/12/88	R	Colorado
55	Spikes, Brandon	LB	6-2	250	9/3/87	2	Florida
64	Thomas, Donald	OL	6-4	310	9/25/85	4	Connecticut
10	Underwood, Tiquan	WR	6-1	183	2/17/87	3	Rutgers
34	Vereen, Shane	RB	5-9	205	5/2/89	R	California
76	Vollmer, Sebastian	T	6-8	315	7/10/84	3	Houston
98	Warren, Gerard	DL	6-4	325	7/25/78	10	Florida
54	Waters, Brian	G	6-3	320	2/18/77	12	North Texas
83	Welker, Wes	WR	5-9	185	5/1/81	8	Texas Tech
62	Wendell, Ryan	C	6-2	290	3/4/86	3	Fresno State
58	White, Tracy	LB	6-0	230	4/14/81	9	Howard
75	Wilfork, Vince	DT	6-2	325	11/4/81	8	Miami (FL)
41	Williams, Malcolm	DB	5-11	200	11/22/87	R	TCU
39	Woodhead, Danny	RB	5-8	195	1/25/85	4	Chadron State

New England Patriots



Danny Aiken (48)
Long Snapper

Mark Anderson (95)
Defensive End

Kyle Arrington (24)
Cornerback

Ron Brace (97)
Defensive Lineman

Tom Brady (12)
Quarterback

Deion Branch (84)
Wide Receiver

Sergio Brown (31)
Safety

Marcus Cannon (61)
Offensive Lineman

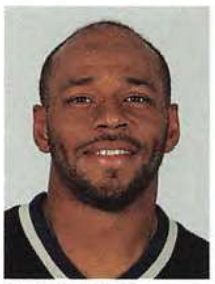
Patrick Chung (25)
Safety

Dan Connolly (63)
Offensive Lineman

Brandon Deaderick (71)
Defensive Lineman

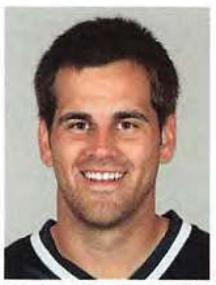
Julian Edelman (11)
Wide Receiver

Shaun Ellis (94)
Defensive End

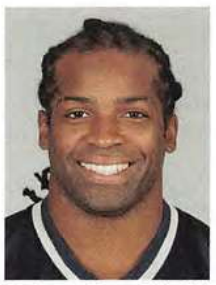


Kevin Faulk (33)
Running Back

Dane Fletcher (52)
Linebacker



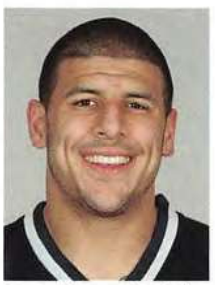
Stephen Gostkowski (3)
Kicker



BenJarvus Green-Ellis (42)
Running Back

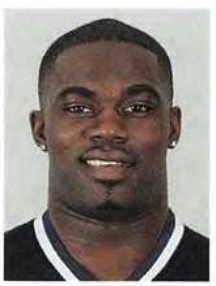
Rob Gronkowski (87)
Tight End

Gary Guyton (59)
Linebacker

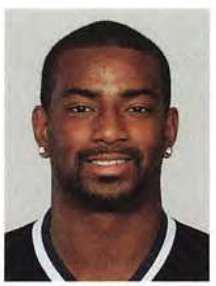


Aaron Hernandez (81)
Tight End

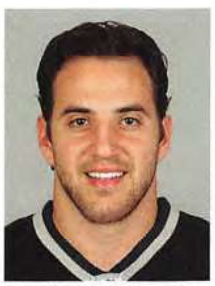
Brian Hoyer (8)
Quarterback



James Ihedigbo (44)
Safety



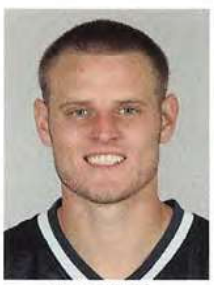
Nate Jones (23)
Defensive Back



Niko Koutouvides (90)
Linebacker

Matt Light (72)
Tackle

Kyle Love (74)
Defensive Lineman



Ryan Mallett (15)
Quarterback

2011 AFC Champions

Logan Mankins (70)
Guard

Jerod Mayo (51)
Linebacker

Devin McCourty (32)
Cornerback

Nick McDonald (65)
Offensive Lineman

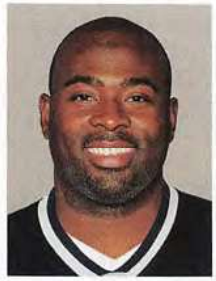
Zoltan Mesko (14)
Punter

Antwaun Molden (27)
Cornerback

Sterling Moore (29)
Defensive Back

Rob Ninkovich (50)
Linebacker

Chad Ochocinco (85)
Wide Receiver



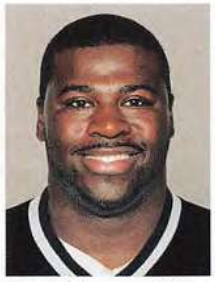
Lousaka Polite (36)
Fullback

Stevan Ridley (22)
Running Back

Matthew Slater (18)
Wide Receiver

Nate Solder (77)
Tackle

Brandon Spikes (55)
Linebacker

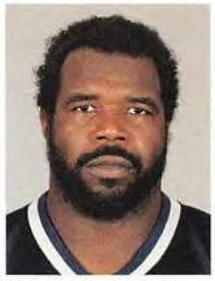


Donald Thomas (64)
Offensive Lineman

Tiquan Underwood (10)
Wide Receiver

Shane Vereen (34)
Running Back

Sebastian Vollmer (76)
Tackle



Gerard Warren (98)
Defensive Lineman

Brian Waters (54)
Guard

Wes Welker (83)
Wide Receiver

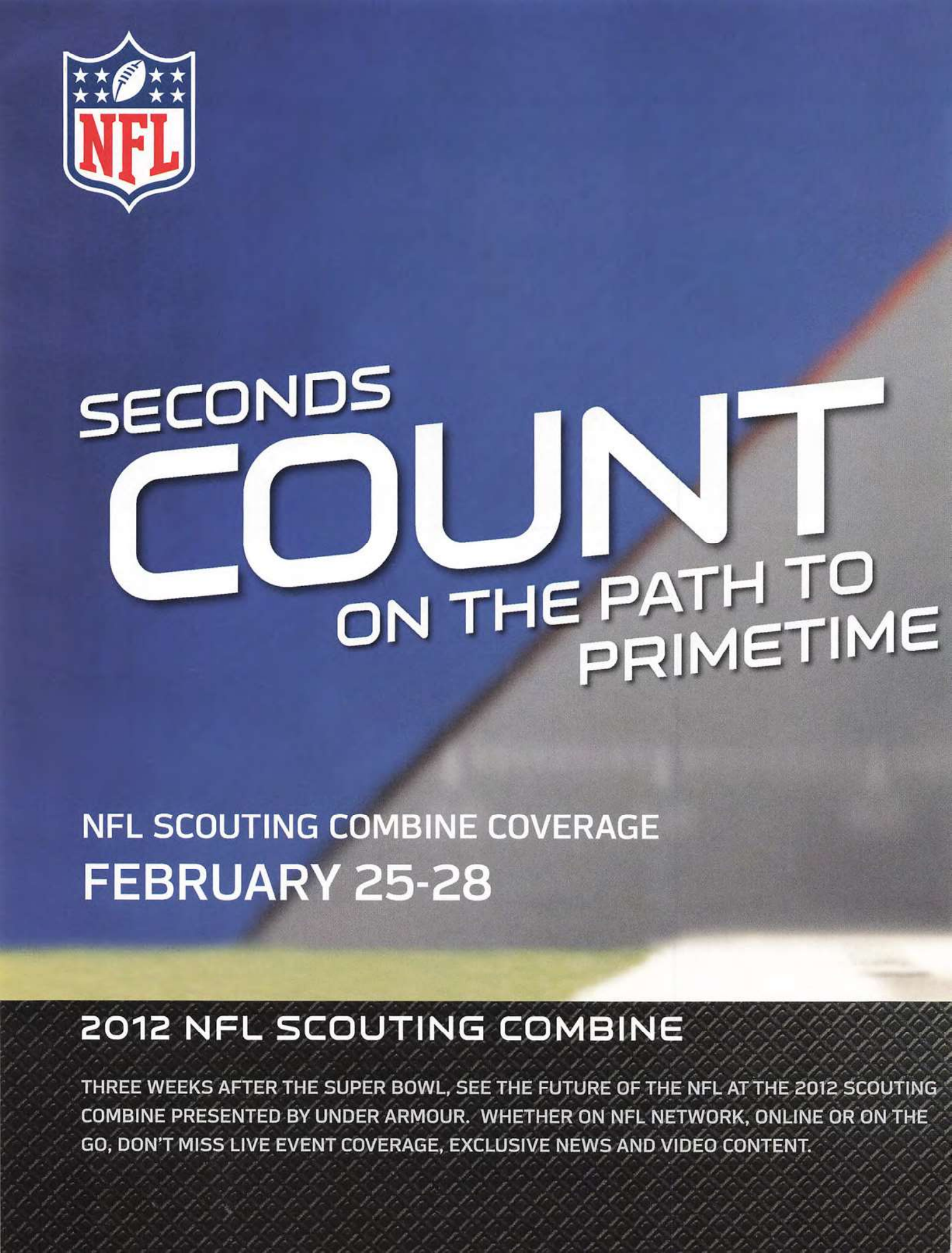
Ryan Wendell (62)
Center

Tracy White (58)
Linebacker

Vince Wilfork (75)
Defensive Tackle

Malcolm Williams (41)
Defensive Back

Danny Woodhead (39)
Running Back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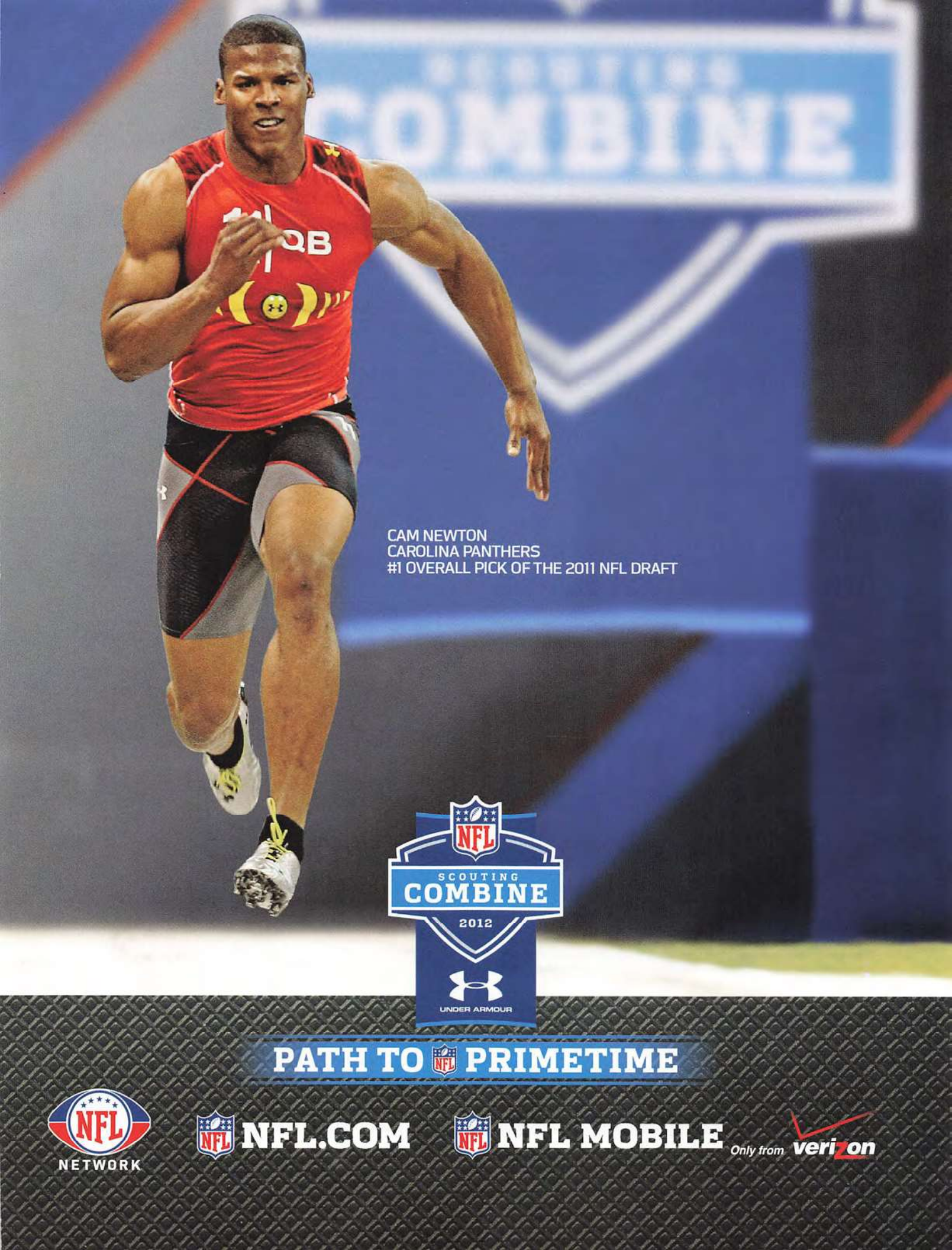
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New York Giants

SCOUTING REPORT

Statistical Leaders

Passing	Comp-Att	Pct	Yds	TD	Int	Rtng
Eli Manning	359-589	61.0	4933	29	16	92.9

Rushing	Att	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
Ahmad Bradshaw	171	659	3.9	37	9
Brandon Jacobs	152	571	3.8	28	7
D.J. Ware	46	163	3.5	17	0
Da'Rel Scott	5	16	3.2	8	0

Receiving	No	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
Victor Cruz	82	1536	18.7	99	9
Hakeem Nicks	76	1192	15.7	68	7
Mario Manningham	39	523	13.4	47	4
Jake Ballard	38	604	15.9	41	4
Ahmad Bradshaw	34	267	7.9	26	2
D.J. Ware	27	170	6.3	22	0
Brandon Jacobs	15	128	8.5	40	1
Bear Pascoe	12	136	11.3	22	0
Henry Hynoski	12	83	6.9	14	0

Defense	Tackles	Assists	Total	Sacks	FR	PD
Antrel Rolle	82	14	96	0.0	0	4
Michael Boley	72	19	91	1.0	3	2
Jason Pierre-Paul	67	21	88	16.5	0	6
Mathias Kiwanuka	61	20	81	3.5	1	1
Kenny Phillips	49	23	72	0.0	0	11
Jacquian Williams	49	12	61	1.0	3	4
Aaron Ross	45	14	59	0.0	0	12
Deon Grant	41	17	58	1.0	1	6
Corey Webster	43	8	51	0.0	0	15
Linval Joseph	34	15	49	2.0	0	3
Chris Canty	31	16	47	4.0	0	1
Justin Tuck	27	10	37	5.0	0	4

Interceptions	No	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
Corey Webster	6	71	11.8	25	0
Kenny Phillips	4	50	12.5	31	0
Aaron Ross	4	19	4.8	19	0
Antrel Rolle	2	-1	-0.5	0	0

Kick Returns	Ret	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
Devin Thomas	25	607	24.3	40	0
Da'Rel Scott	14	341	24.4	38	0

Punt Returns	Ret	FC	Avg	Long	TD
Aaron Ross	14	13	7.1	18	0

Punting	No	Avg	Net	Tchbk	In/20	Long
Steve Weatherford	82	45.7	39.2	6	25	62

Field Goals	Total	1-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50+
Lawrence Tynes	19-24	0-0	12-12	3-4	3-5	1-3

Offense

No	Player	Pos
80	Victor Cruz	WR
66	David Diehl	LT
77	Kevin Boothe	LG
64	David Baas	C
76	Chris Snee	RG
67	Kareem McKenzie	RT
85	Jake Ballard	TE
88	Hakeem Nicks	WR
10	Eli Manning	QB
44	Ahmad Bradshaw	RB
45	Henry Hynoski	FB

Defense

No	Player	Pos
91	Justin Tuck	LE
97	Linval Joseph	LDT
99	Chris Canty	RDT
72	Osi Umenyiora	RE
94	Mathias Kiwanuka	SLB
93	Chase Blackburn	MLB
59	Michael Boley	WLB
23	Corey Webster	LCB
21	Kenny Phillips	SS
26	Antrel Rolle	FS
31	Aaron Ross	RCB

Numerical Roster

No	Player	Pos
5	Steve Weatherford	P
8	David Carr	QB
9	Lawrence Tynes	K
10	Eli Manning	QB
12	Jerrel Jernigan	WR
13	Ramses Barden	WR
15	Devin Thomas	WR
20	Prince Amukamara	CB
21	Kenny Phillips	S
22	Derrick Martin	DB
23	Corey Webster	CB
26	Antrel Rolle	S
27	Brandon Jacobs	RB
28	D.J. Ware	RB
31	Aaron Ross	CB
33	Da'Rel Scott	RB
34	Deon Grant	S
36	Will Blackmon	CB
39	Tyler Sash	S
44	Ahmad Bradshaw	RB
45	Henry Hynoski	FB
47	Travis Beckum	TE
51	Zak DeOssie	LS
53	Greg Jones	LB
55	Spencer Paysinger	LB
57	Jacquian Williams	LB
58	Mark Herzlich	LB
59	Michael Boley	LB
62	Mitch Petrus	G
63	Jim Cordle	C
64	David Baas	C
66	David Diehl	G
67	Kareem McKenzie	T
69	Justin Trattou	DE
70	Tony Ugoh	T
71	Dave Tollefson	DE
72	Osi Umenyiora	DE
73	Jimmy Kennedy	DT
76	Chris Snee	G
77	Kevin Boothe	G
79	James Brewer	T
80	Victor Cruz	WR
82	Mario Manningham	WR
85	Jake Ballard	TE
86	Bear Pascoe	TE
88	Hakeem Nicks	WR
90	Jason Pierre-Paul	DE
91	Justin Tuck	DE
93	Chase Blackburn	LB
94	Mathias Kiwanuka	LB
95	Rocky Bernard	DT
97	Linval Joseph	DT
99	Chris Canty	DT

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2 A one-time bonus award of twenty thousand (20,000) Points will be awarded after the first purchase or balance transfer is posted to the Account. **The Balance Transfer is subject to the Balance Transfer Fee in the Terms and Conditions. Balance Transfer Checks do not qualify for bonus points.** Bonus Points will be posted approximately thirty (30) days after the initial qualifying transaction.

3 Redemption Options: Cardmembers may redeem Points for a variety of rewards including NFL gift cards, certain NFL merchandise, NFL collectibles, NFL based experiences, and cash back via a statement credit towards any purchase transactions of $25 or more that posted to your account within the last 90 days.

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GIANTS RISE TO REACH ANOTHER SUPER BOWL

The Giants' drive to Super Bowl XLVI was sparked by quarterback Eli Manning, whose 4,933 passing yards set a franchise record.

Greg M. Cooper/US Presswire

Feels like déjà vu, doesn't it? The New York Giants are back in the Super Bowl, taking a path through Lambeau Field and winning the conference title game with an overtime field goal. And just like four years ago, they have a red-hot quarterback and a ton of confidence.

It wasn't an easy path, but they negotiated it all to arrive in Indianapolis with the opportunity to win their second Super Bowl in five years and fourth in franchise history.

The Giants' roller coaster season included a 6-2 start (one of those wins coming at New England), followed by four straight losses, then a late-season surge that took them to the NFC East title. They then had to win three playoff games, including victories on the road against the conference's top two seeds.

There are multiple reasons why that happened, but the biggest was a defensive improvement of epic proportions. It started with the defense not allowing a point in a Wild Card win over the Falcons, carried over to the next week against the Packers and QB Aaron Rodgers, and continued in the NFC title game when the 49ers managed just 15 first downs and converted only one third-down opportunity.

The Giants have a dominant pass rush, which generated four sacks against the Packers and three more against San Francisco. Their secondary is covering well and delivering punishing hits.

"I expect greatness from this team," said safety Antrel Rolle. "We don't settle for less. We found our identity against the Jets (a 29-14 win in Week 16) and we're going to keep that identity."

Eli Manning—aiming to become the 11th quarterback to win multiple Super Bowls—played well during the regular season, engineering six fourth-quarter comebacks. But he does his best work in the postseason, evidenced by the MVP award he won in Super Bowl XLII against the Patriots and his NFL-record five career road playoff victories.

What makes him so good in the postseason?

"I think it's his mentality, it's his approach," says head coach Tom Coughlin. "Nobody sees what he does behind the scenes. He is a studier and a pounder."

Howard Smith/US Presswire

Tim Fermel/US Presswire

When the Giants need tough yardage, they can turn to running back Brandon Jacobs (left). Justin Tuck is part of a defensive front that brings plenty of pressure.

OFFENSE

The key to the Giants' offensive success is their ability to come up with big plays—through the air and on the ground—that give them the edge. Mostly, it results from Manning consistently putting the ball into the hands of his impressive group of game-breaking wide receivers.

He no longer lives in the shadow of his big brother, Peyton. Instead, he has moved into the category of elite quarterbacks. He is similar to his brother, however, in that he is excellent at commanding the game at the line of scrimmage and, thanks to his exceptional preparation and pre-snap reads, knows how to move the coverage where he wants it to go. His 92.9 passer rating was the highest of his career.

Although Manning isn't particularly fast on his feet, he is adept at moving to avoid pressure in the pocket and extending the play. He's also helped by his exceptionally quick release, and he's willing to tuck the ball and run if the situation warrants.

Then there's his remarkable chemistry with his receivers, who are extremely talented. The most dynamic is Victor Cruz, who ranked third in the league with 1,536 receiving yards and whose 18.7 yards per catch was the highest among the NFL's top 30 wide receivers. Cruz, who works from the slot, does an excellent job of making defenders miss and picking up yards after the catch. He had nine touchdowns on the year, and against the 49ers collected 10 receptions for 142 yards.

Hakeem Nicks, who had 76 catches and averaged an impressive 15.7 yards per reception, uses his strength and athleticism to fight through coverage and make big plays. Some of the biggest have come in the playoffs—he caught the first Giants touchdown in the win over Atlanta and had a pair of scoring grabs at Green Bay. Mario Manningham possesses plenty of speed and explosiveness. He had only one reception against the 49ers, but it went for a touchdown. That trio allows Manning to look for a favorable matchup and deliver the ball.

The Giants' running game started to become more physical in the latter part of the season, and that trend has extended into the playoffs. The team has a pair of bruising running backs in Ahmad Bradshaw and Brandon Jacobs. Bradshaw is a complete back, with the ability to run well inside or outside, catch the ball, and handle responsibilities in pass protection. Jacobs has an abundance of straight-ahead power and, when he gets into a groove, can be nearly impossible to bring down. They combined for 1,230 yards and 16 touchdowns on the ground; Bradshaw added 34 receptions.

When the Giants want to get even more physical, they insert fullback Henry Hynoski to help open holes. That's especially true in the red zone, where they tend to be more effective running than passing, though tight end Jake Ballard (38 catches, 4 TDs) can't be ignored.

Similar to other areas on offense, the line came on during the latter part of the season. It has survived through some difficult times, including the loss of left tackle Will Beatty to injury. That forced veteran left guard David Diehl to move there in his place, and he has held up well mainly because of his savvy. Kevin Boothe took over at left guard and does a good job of getting off the ball quickly.

The best of the interior linemen is right guard Chris Snee, who remains effective because of his scrappiness and intelligence. Right tackle Kareem McKenzie uses every bit of his 350-pound body to create push for the running game, and whatever center Dave Baas might lack in athleticism, he makes up for with smarts and aggressiveness.

NFC CHAMPIONSHIP GAME
Giants 20
49ers 17 (OT)

A gripping contest between long-time playoff rivals needed overtime before Lawrence Tynes' 31-yard field goal settled it, putting the Giants in the Super Bowl for the second time in five years.

New York capitalized on a fumbled punt return for the winning points, just as it had earlier in the game for a go-ahead touchdown. Jacquian Williams stripped the ball from return man Kyle Williams, and it was recovered by Devin Thomas at the 49ers' 24. Five plays later, Tynes hit the decisive kick.

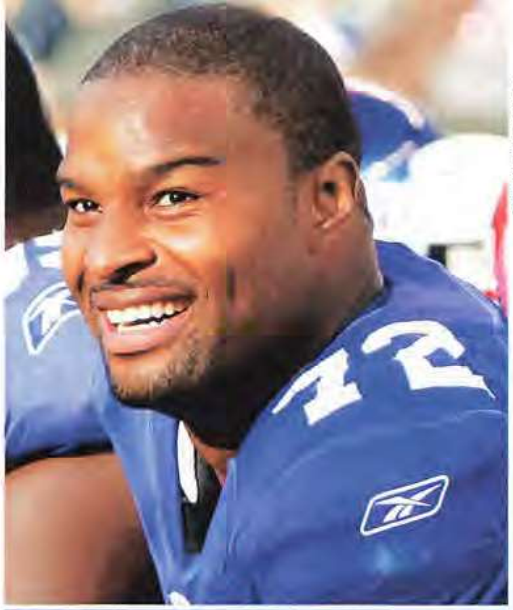
Vernon Davis caught two TDs for San Francisco, a 73-yarder to open the scoring and a 28-yard grab that gave his team a 14-10 lead. But late in the third quarter, Thomas pounced on a muffed punt at the 49ers' 29-yard line, positioning QB Eli Manning for a quick drive that ended with a 17-yard throw to Mario Manningham for a go-ahead touchdown.

David Akers would tie the game at 17-17 on a 25-yard field goal with 5:39 remaining, and the teams then traded a series of punts into overtime before Thomas' recovery.

Manning went 32-of-58 for 316 yards, including a 6-yard throw to Bear Pascoe for the Giants' first touchdown.

2011 Giants Results (12-7)

Opponent	Score	W/L
Redskins	14-28	L
RAMS	28-16	W
Eagles	29-16	W
Cardinals	31-27	W
SEAHAWKS	25-36	L
BILLS	27-24	W
DOLPHINS	20-17	W
Patriots	24-20	W
49ers	20-27	L
EAGLES	10-17	L
Saints	24-49	L
PACKERS	35-38	L
Cowboys	37-34	W
REDSKINS	10-23	L
Jets	29-14	W
COWBOYS	31-14	W
NFC Playoffs		
FALCONS	24-2	W
Packers	37-20	W
49ers	(OT) 20-17	W



Debby Wong/US Presswire

Osi Umenyiora had a pair of sacks and forced a fumble in the Giants' divisional playoff victory over Green Bay.

DEFENSE

The strength of the Giants' defense is their ability to consistently generate a strong pass rush with their front four. By limiting their blitzing and avoiding complex pass-rush schemes, they can keep more defenders in coverage. And by utilizing a seven-man rotation up front, they can wear out most opposing offensive lines and win the majority of battles with their tremendous physical talent and versatility.

Start with Jason Pierre-Paul, who ranked fourth in the NFL with 16.5 sacks. He's an incredible athlete who might very well be the best outside rusher in the game. While he usually lines up at right end, he also has the ability to be just as effective as an inside rusher. In addition to being incredibly fast, he has power and extremely long arms.

Justin Tuck lines up at left end, but rushes from the inside when the Giants are in nickel coverage and tends to be much more difficult to block from there. After being slowed by various injuries, Tuck has regained the form that made him a Pro Bowler. Osi Umenyiora also is healthy again and is back to being a pass-rushing terror from the outside or the inside.

Defensive tackle Linval Joseph has considerable strength and moves well. Others in the defensive line rotation are Dave Tollefson, who has a knack for finishing off plays after the quarterback is flushed from the pocket; Rocky Bernard, a solid inside rusher; and Chris Canty, who has good size and quickness.

Still, the Giants' defensive line isn't only about rushing the passer. It can do a solid job against the run—as it proved by stuffing NFC rushing leader Michael Turner in the Wild Card round and limiting Frank Gore in the conference championship game—largely because of its ability to get good penetration.

Strong-side linebacker Mathias Kiwanuka can be yet another pass-rushing force. On the few occasions when the Giants do blitz, Kiwanuka is usually the one who does the best job of getting to the passer. Weak-side linebacker Michael Boley, who has good speed and instincts, works well in space. Middle linebacker Chase Blackburn makes his presence felt with his smarts and ability to quickly and accurately relay signals and adjustments to the rest of the front seven.

The Giants' strong pass rush does plenty to help their secondary. Corey Webster, the team's best cornerback, typically is assigned the opponent's top receiver. Aaron Ross, the other starting corner, relies on being more physical.

Strong safety Kenny Phillips entered the playoffs playing his best football of the season. He is a good tackler and does a solid job helping the corners. The other safety, Antrel Rolle, is physical enough to hold his own near the line of scrimmage and excels in covering the slot. Hard-hitting Deon Grant joins the unit when they use their "big nickel" package.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Lawrence Tynes made 19 of 24 field goals during the year and hit all but one attempt from inside 40 yards. Punter Steve Weatherford is a good athlete who finished tied for 13th in the league with a gross average of 45.7 yards per kick and a net of 39.2.

While the Giants don't have a dynamic return game, rookie Jerrel Jernigan has a great deal of speed and won't hesitate to try and run a kick out of the end zone. Will Blackmon started returning punts in the final month of the season.

WHAT TO EXPECT

If the Giants are going to win, they'll need to do it with a defense that doesn't allow the Patriots to get their lethal passing game going.

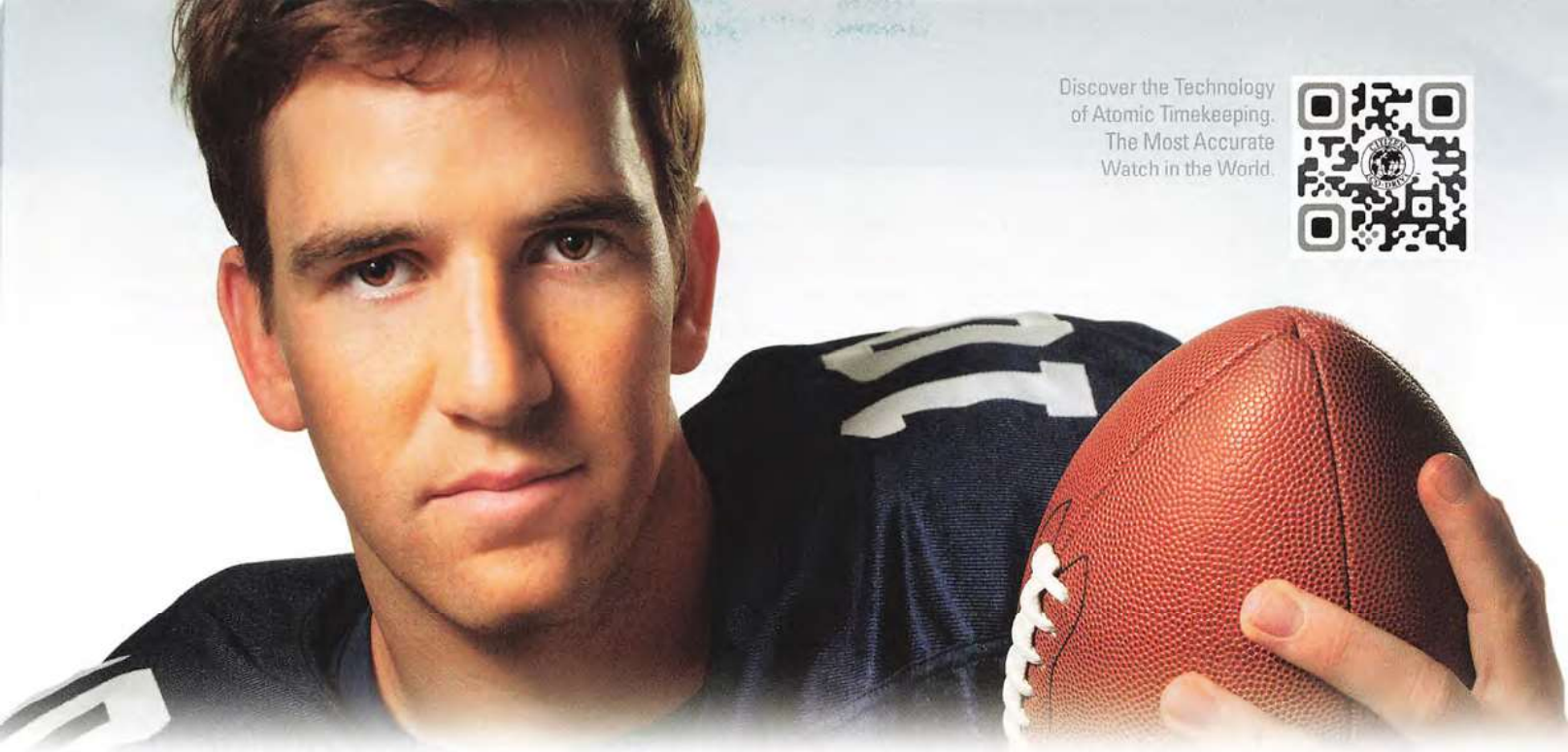
They will rely on their front four to take care of business from the start, setting the tone by applying pressure to throw off Tom Brady's rhythm. It was successful four years ago in Super Bowl XLII and worked again in this year's regular-season meeting when the teams played a scoreless first half.

Manning, meanwhile, will be eager to test the New England secondary with mid-range and deep throws, the goal being to loosen things up for the powerful backfield combination of Bradshaw and Jacobs to get in a flow.

One thing is certain: Manning won't be flustered by the Super Bowl spotlight. Anyone who thinks he'll be overwhelmed hasn't been paying close attention.

Nothing about this game will faze Coughlin, either. He's been here before and has shown he can beat the Patriots. With that experience, the Giants will be ready to deal with whatever comes their way.

~Vic Carucci



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John Mara President & CEO

John Mara, in his 21st season with the New York Giants, is the team's president and chief executive officer. He assumed the team presidency upon the passing of his father, Wellington Mara, in 2005 and is responsible for all administrative, legal, and financial aspects of the organization. Previously, he had been the team's executive vice president and chief operating officer.

Since Mara joined the organization in an official capacity, the Giants have reached the playoffs nine times, won five NFC East titles, and are playing in their third Super Bowl.

In October, Mara was appointed chairman of the NFL management council's executive committee/labor and played an important role in negotiating a new collective bargaining agreement with the NFLPA. He also serves on the influential NFL competition committee, which studies all aspects of the game and recommends rules and policy changes, as well as the league's management council executive committee and the committee on workplace diversity.

Born in New York City, Mara graduated from Boston College in 1976 with cum laude honors and earned his law degree from Fordham University in 1979. He began his career as an attorney with the New York law firm of Vedder, Price, Kaufman, Kammholz and Day, specializing in labor and employment law and litigation.

He and his wife, Denise, are the parents of five children: Lauren, Courtney, John Jr., Christine, and Erin. They also have three grandchildren: Christopher, Hailey, and Jack.

Steve Tisch Chairman, Executive VP

Steve Tisch has the distinction of being the only person on the planet to earn both an Academy Award and a Super Bowl ring. He won the former as one of the producers of *Forrest Gump*, which was awarded the Oscar for Best Picture of 1994, and the latter as chairman and executive vice president of the Giants, who defeated the New England Patriots in Super Bowl XLII.

Tisch joined the Giants organization as executive vice president in July 2005, but he has been intimately involved with the team since his father, Preston Robert Tisch, purchased 50 percent of the franchise in 1991. He assumed his current title upon his father's passing in 2005.

Tisch worked closely with John Mara on the planning and construction for MetLife Stadium, the beautiful venue that is the Giants' new home. In addition, he joined Mara, his brother Jonathan (the Giants' treasurer), and Jets owner Woody Johnson in leading the successful bid to bring Super Bowl XLVIII to MetLife Stadium in 2014. It will be the first Super Bowl played in an open-air stadium in a cold-weather region.

Tisch is among the most successful producers in the motion picture industry (*Forrest Gump* won nine Academy Awards and remains one of the 25 highest domestic box office grossing films in history). He is a partner in Escape Artists, an independently financed film production company based at Sony Pictures Entertainment.

New York Giants Team Officials

JOHN MARA
President
& Chief Executive Officer

STEVE TISCH
Chairman
& Executive Vice President

CHRIS MARA
Vice President
of Player Evaluation

JONATHAN TISCH
Treasurer

JERRY REESE
Senior Vice President
& General Manager

KEVIN ABRAMS
Assistant General Manager

DAVE GETTLEMAN
Director of Pro Personnel

MARC ROSS
Director of College Scouting

MATTHEW HARRISS
Football Operations
Coordinator

KEN STERNFELD
Assistant Director of
Pro Personnel

JOE COLLINS
JEREMIAH DAVIS
JERRY SHAY
STEVE VERDEROSA
Executive Scouts

JEREMY BREIT
STEPHEN DEVINE
DONNIE ETHERIDGE
RYAN JONES
STEVE MALIN
CHRIS PETTIT
CHRISTOPHER WATTS
Scouts

MATT SHAUGER
PATRICK HANSCOMB
Pro Scouts

RONNIE BARNES
Senior Vice President of
Medical Services

STEVE KENNELLY
Assistant Head
Athletic Trainer

BYRON HANSEN
Coordinator of Rehabilitation

LEIGH WEISS
Physical Therapist/
Assistant Athletic Trainer

ED WAGNER JR.
Equipment Manager
& Locker Room Manager

JOE SKIBA
Equipment Director

ED SKIBA
TIM SLAMAN
Assistant Equipment Managers

JON BERGER
Senior Director of
Football Information

CHRIS PRIDY
Coaching Assistant

DAVE MALTESE
Video Director

CARMEN PIZZANO
ED TRIGGS
STEPHEN VENDITTI
Assistant Video Directors

CHARLES WAY
Director of
Player Development

MICHAEL STEVENS
Senior Vice President
& Chief Marketing Officer

JOHN MAGUIRE
Senior Vice President
of Corporate Sponsorships

JUSTIN WARREN
Director of I.T., Networking
& Systems Administrator

JULIE GLISKY
Director of I.T.,
Applications & Development

JIM PHELAN
Director of Administration

JEFF CONROY
Manager of
Team Operations

PAT HANLON
Senior Vice President of
Communications

PETER JOHN-BAPTISTE
Vice President of
Communications

FRANK MARA
Vice President of
Community Relations

ALLISON STANGEBY
Director of
Community Relations

WILLIAM HELLER, ESQ.
Senior Vice President
& General Counsel

CHRISTINE PROCOPS
Senior Vice President
& Chief Financial Officer

STEVE HAMRAHI
Vice President of Finance

JOHN GORMAN
Director of Ticketing

AMY MATLINS
Assistant Director of Ticketing

Tom Coughlin Head Coach

Long regarded as one of the NFL's premier head coaches, Tom Coughlin is among the most successful in the 86-year history of the New York Giants. He reached the pinnacle of his profession during the 2007 season when he led the Giants to victory in Super Bowl XLII. His team, big underdogs entering the game, scored two fourth-quarter touchdowns to beat the previously undefeated New England Patriots, 17-14.

Coughlin is one of just six active coaches to lead a team to a Super Bowl victory. The others are Bill Belichick, Mike Shanahan, Mike Tomlin, Sean Payton, and Mike McCarthy. He also was an assistant coach for the Giants when they won Super Bowl XXV.

Including this year's 9-7 mark—which produced the team's eighth NFC East crown—Coughlin has led the Giants to seven straight seasons with a .500 or better record. That represents the team's longest streak since they had 10 in a row from 1954-63.

Under Coughlin, the Giants routinely establish franchise milestones. When they reached the 2008 playoffs (after winning the NFC East with a 12-4 record), it marked the first time they had made the postseason four straight years. The team scored 425 points that season and then racked up 402 in 2009, marking the first time that the Giants scored 400 or more points in back-to-back seasons.

Prior to becoming the Giants' head coach in 2004, Coughlin spent eight seasons at the helm of the Jacksonville Jaguars and led them to four straight postseason berths (1996-99) and two trips to the AFC Championship Game. In addition to his first coaching stint with the Giants (1988-90), Coughlin was an assistant on the pro level with the Eagles and Packers.

Coughlin is a graduate of Syracuse and coached collegiately at his alma mater as well as at Rochester Institute of Technology and Boston College, serving as Boston College's head coach from 1991-93.

Born in Waterloo, N.Y., Coughlin is the oldest of seven children. He and his wife, Judy, have two daughters (Keli and Kate), two sons (Brian and Tim), and 10 grandchildren.

Assistants	Responsibilities
JACK BICKNELL JR.	Assistant Offensive Line
PERRY FEWELL	Defensive Coordinator
PAT FLAHERTY	Offensive Line
KEVIN GILBRIDE	Offensive Coordinator
KEVIN M. GILBRIDE	Offensive Quality Control
PETER GIUNTA	Secondary/Corners
JIM HERRMANN	Linebackers
AL HOLCOMB	Defensive Quality Control
JERALD INGRAM	Running Backs
LARRY IZZO	Assistant Special Teams
DAVID MERRITT SR.	Secondary/Safeties
ROBERT NUNN	Defensive Line
JERRY PALMIERI	Strength and Conditioning
MARKUS PAUL	Assistant Strength and Conditioning
MIKE POPE	Tight Ends
TOM QUINN	Special Teams Coordinator
SEAN RYAN	Wide Receivers
MIKE SULLIVAN	Quarterbacks

Giants Alphabetical Roster

No	Player	Pos	Ht	Wt	Birth Date	NFL Exp	College
20	Amukamara, Prince	CB	6-0	207	6/6/89	R	Nebraska
64	Baas, David	C	6-4	312	9/28/81	7	Michigan
85	Ballard, Jake	TE	6-6	275	12/21/87	2	Ohio State
13	Barden, Ramses	WR	6-6	224	1/1/86	3	Cal Poly
47	Beckum, Travis	TE	6-3	234	1/24/87	3	Wisconsin
95	Bernard, Rocky	DT	6-3	301	4/19/79	10	Texas A&M
93	Blackburn, Chase	LB	6-4	242	6/10/83	7	Akron
36	Blackmon, Will	CB	6-0	206	10/27/84	6	Boston College
59	Boley, Michael	LB	6-3	230	8/24/82	7	Southern Mississippi
77	Boothe, Kevin	G	6-5	320	7/5/83	6	Cornell
44	Bradshaw, Ahmad	RB	5-10	214	3/19/86	5	Marshall
79	Brewer, James	T	6-6	330	12/23/87	R	Indiana
99	Canty, Chris	DT	6-7	317	11/10/82	7	Virginia
8	Carr, David	QB	6-3	212	7/21/79	10	Fresno State
63	Cordle, Jim	C	6-3	320	8/22/87	1	Ohio State
80	Cruz, Victor	WR	6-0	204	11/11/86	2	Massachusetts
51	DeOssie, Zak	LS	6-4	249	5/24/84	5	Brown
66	Diehl, David	G	6-5	304	9/15/80	9	Illinois
34	Grant, Deon	S	6-2	215	3/14/79	12	Tennessee
58	Herzlich, Mark	LB	6-4	246	9/1/87	R	Boston College
45	Hynoski, Henry	FB	6-1	266	12/30/88	R	Pittsburgh
27	Jacobs, Brandon	RB	6-4	264	7/6/82	7	Southern Illinois
12	Jernigan, Jerrel	WR	5-8	189	6/14/89	R	Troy
53	Jones, Greg	LB	6-0	248	10/5/88	R	Michigan State
97	Joseph, Linval	DT	6-4	323	10/10/88	2	East Carolina
73	Kennedy, Jimmy	DT	6-4	302	11/15/79	9	Penn State
94	Kiwanuka, Mathias	LB	6-5	267	3/8/83	6	Boston College
10	Manning, Eli	QB	6-4	218	1/3/81	8	Mississippi
82	Manningham, Mario	WR	6-0	185	5/25/86	4	Michigan
22	Martin, Derrick	DB	5-10	198	5/16/85	5	Wyoming
67	McKenzie, Kareem	T	6-6	330	5/24/79	11	Penn State
88	Nicks, Hakeem	WR	6-1	208	1/14/88	3	North Carolina
86	Pascoe, Bear	TE	6-5	283	2/23/86	3	Fresno State
55	Paysinger, Spencer	LB	6-2	236	6/28/88	R	Oregon
62	Petrus, Mitch	G	6-3	315	5/11/87	2	Arkansas
21	Phillips, Kenny	S	6-2	217	11/24/86	4	Miami (FL)
90	Pierre-Paul, Jason	DE	6-5	278	1/1/89	2	South Florida
26	Rolle, Antrel	S	6-0	206	12/16/82	6	Miami (FL)
31	Ross, Aaron	CB	6-0	190	9/15/82	5	Texas
39	Sash, Tyler	S	6-0	215	5/27/88	R	Iowa
33	Scott, Da'Rel	RB	5-11	210	5/26/88	R	Maryland
76	Snee, Chris	G	6-3	305	1/18/82	8	Boston College
15	Thomas, Devin	WR	6-2	221	11/15/86	4	Michigan State
71	Tollefson, Dave	DE	6-4	266	7/10/82	5	NW Missouri State
69	Trattou, Justin	DE	6-4	255	3/28/88	R	Florida
91	Tuck, Justin	DE	6-5	268	3/29/83	7	Notre Dame
9	Tynes, Lawrence	K	6-1	194	5/3/78	8	Troy
70	Ugoh, Tony	T	6-5	301	11/17/83	5	Arkansas
72	Umenyiora, Osi	DE	6-3	255	11/16/81	9	Troy
28	Ware, D.J.	RB	6-0	225	2/18/85	5	Georgia
5	Weatherford, Steve	P	6-2	211	12/17/82	7	Illinois
23	Webster, Corey	CB	6-0	200	3/2/82	7	LSU
57	Williams, Jacquian	LB	6-3	224	7/20/88	R	South Florida

New York Giants

Prince Amukamara (20)
Cornerback

David Baas (64)
Center

Jake Ballard (85)
Tight End

Ramses Barden (13)
Wide Receiver

Travis Beckum (47)
Tight End

Rocky Bernard (95)
Defensive Tackle

Chase Blackburn (93)
Linebacker

Will Blackmon (36)
Cornerback

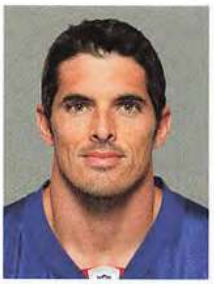
Michael Boley (59)
Linebacker

Kevin Boothe (77)
Guard

Ahmad Bradshaw (44)
Running Back

James Brewer (79)
Tackle

Chris Canty (99)
Defensive Tackle



David Carr (8)
Quarterback

Jim Cordle (63)
Center

Victor Cruz (80)
Wide Receiver

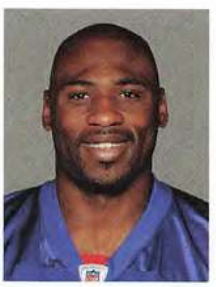
Zak DeOssie (51)
Long Snapper

David Diehl (66)
Guard

Deon Grant (34)
Safety

Mark Herzlich (58)
Linebacker

Henry Hynoski (45)
Fullback

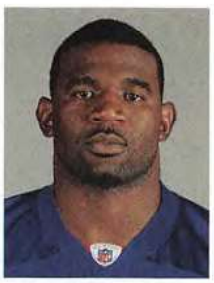


Brandon Jacobs (27)
Running Back

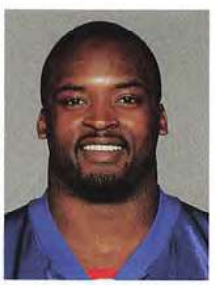
Jerrel Jernigan (12)
Wide Receiver

Greg Jones (53)
Linebacker

Linval Joseph (97)
Defensive Tackle

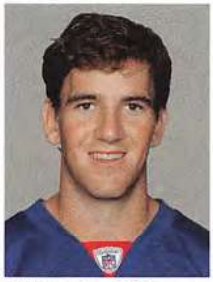


Jimmy Kennedy (73)
Defensive Tackle



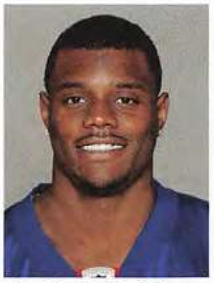
Mathias Kiwanuka (94)
Linebacker

2011 NFC Champions



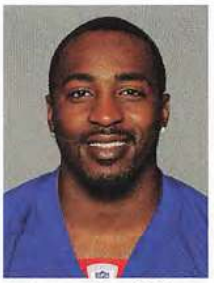
Eli Manning (10)
Quarterback

Mario Manningham (82)
Wide Receiver



Derrick Martin (22)
Defensive Back

Kareem McKenzie (67)
Tackle



Hakeem Nicks (88)
Wide Receiver

Bear Pascoe (86)
Tight End

Spencer Paysinger (55)
Linebacker

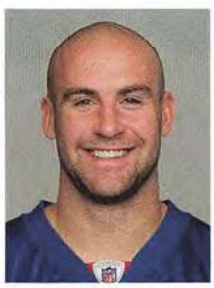
Mitch Petrus (62)
Guard

Kenny Phillips (21)
Safety

Jason Pierre-Paul (90)
Defensive End

Antrel Rolle (26)
Safety

Aaron Ross (31)
Cornerback



Tyler Sash (39)
Safety

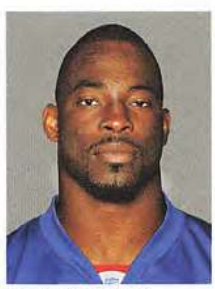
Da'Rel Scott (33)
Running Back

Chris Snee (76)
Guard

Devin Thomas (15)
Wide Receiver

Dave Tollefson (71)
Defensive End

Justin Trattou (69)
Defensive End



Justin Tuck (91)
Defensive End

Lawrence Tynes (9)
Kicker

Tony Ugoh (70)
Tackle

Osi Umenyiora (72)
Defensive End

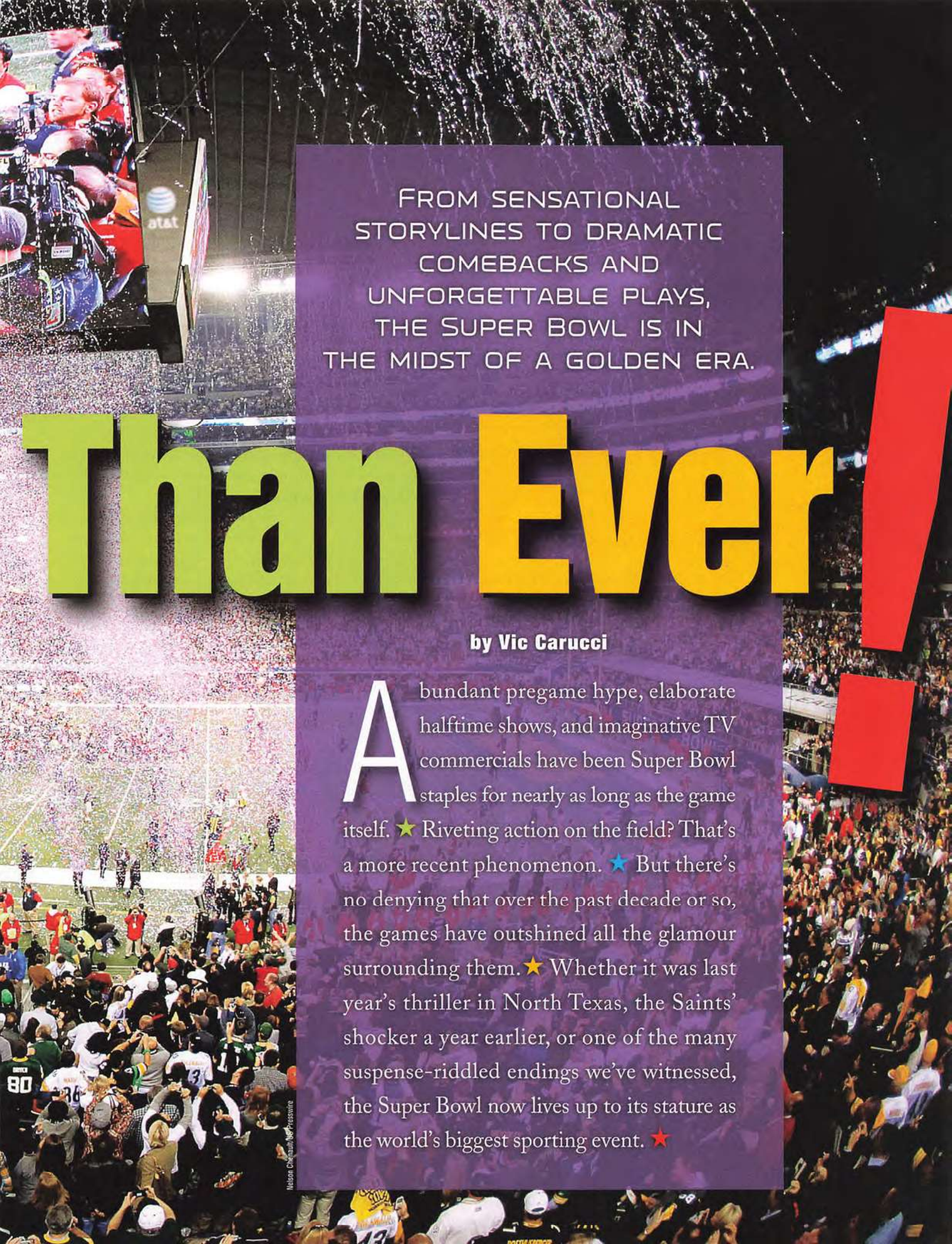
D.J. Ware (28)
Running Back

Steve Weatherford (5)
Punter

Corey Webster (23)
Cornerback

Jacquian Williams (57)
Linebacker

Better



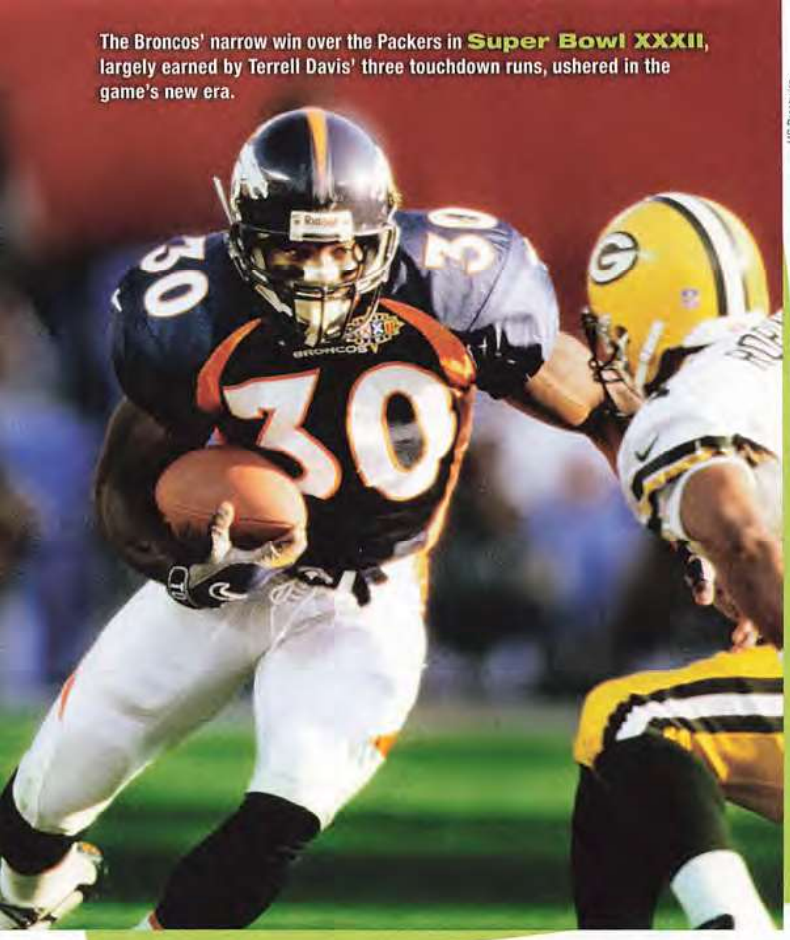
FROM SENSATIONAL STORYLINES TO DRAMATIC COMEBACKS AND UNFORGETTABLE PLAYS, THE SUPER BOWL IS IN THE MIDST OF A GOLDEN ERA.

Than Ever!

by Vic Carucci

Abundant pregame hype, elaborate halftime shows, and imaginative TV commercials have been Super Bowl staples for nearly as long as the game itself. ★ Riveting action on the field? That's a more recent phenomenon. ★ But there's no denying that over the past decade or so, the games have outshined all the glamour surrounding them. ★ Whether it was last year's thriller in North Texas, the Saints' shocker a year earlier, or one of the many suspense-riddled endings we've witnessed, the Super Bowl now lives up to its stature as the world's biggest sporting event. ★

Nelson Chenault/USPresswire



The Broncos' narrow win over the Packers in **Super Bowl XXXII**, largely earned by Terrell Davis' three touchdown runs, ushered in the game's new era.

US Presswire

If you're trying to pinpoint when this new era started, look to Super Bowl XXXII, when the Denver Broncos slipped past Green Bay with a late touchdown, snapping the NFC's 13-game Super Bowl winning streak. Since then, three Super Bowls have seen dramatic fourth-quarter comebacks and another five have been tied in the final 15 minutes. Nine of the games have been decided by a touchdown or less.

While the mystique of the Jets' stunning win over the Colts in Super Bowl III will always be with us, even that game is finally being relegated to its place in history rather than being held out as the game's seminal moment. How about the Patriots, with a young Tom Brady behind center, pulling off a huge upset against Kurt Warner and the Rams in Super Bowl XXXVI? Or the Giants' incredible victory over the 18-0 Patriots in Super Bowl XLII?

Upsets and down-to-the-wire finishes now define what the Super Bowl is about. Why? Because they also define what the NFL is all about.

Each year brings a crop of newcomers to the postseason. Since 1996, at least five clubs have reached the playoffs that weren't there a year earlier. A team such as the 2008 Arizona Cardinals—their 9-7 regular-season record didn't scare anyone—can get hot and end up in the Super Bowl, where they pushed the favored Pittsburgh Steelers to the brink before succumbing in the final minute. Last year's Super Bowl brought together sixth-seeded Green Bay, which had to beat three division champions on the road just to reach the title game, and a Pittsburgh squad that had watched the 2009 postseason from the sidelines.

The game is now the ultimate payoff following two weeks of media buildup, glitzy parties and concerts in the host region, marathon pregame coverage, and the spectacular array of sights and sounds throughout the stadium. And once that final piece of postgame confetti hits the ground, no longer do millions of disappointed TV viewers sigh and say, "Oh, well, at least the halftime show was entertaining."

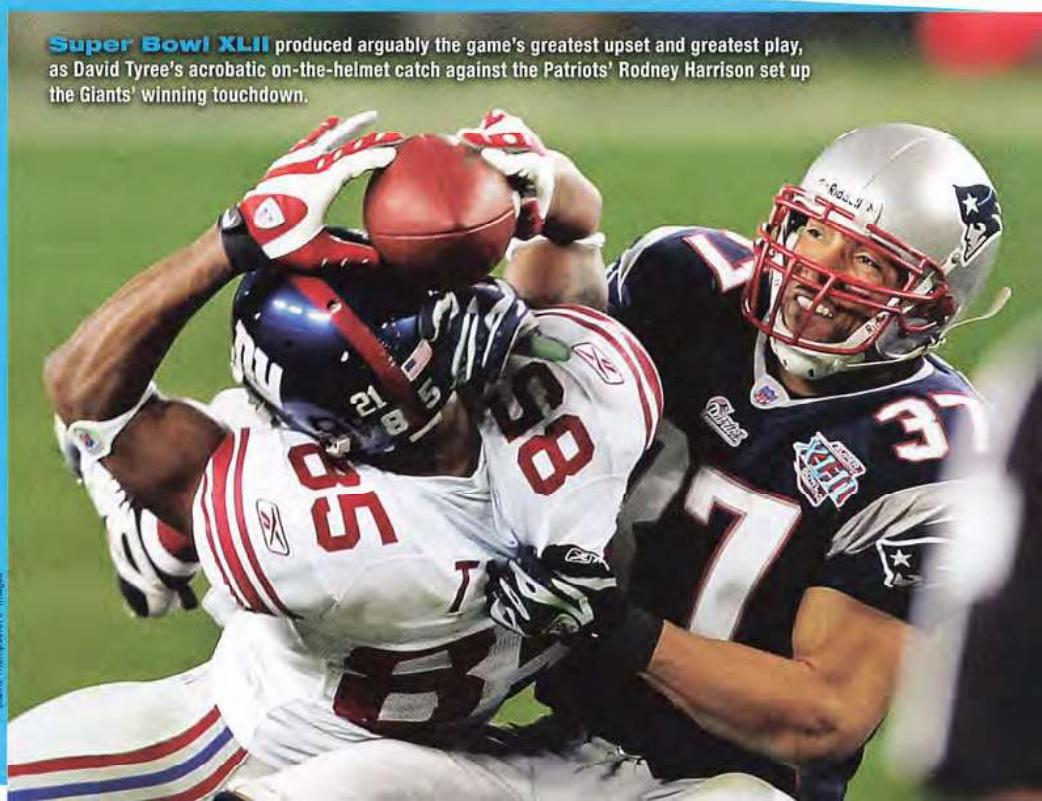
Those with long memories will recall that entertaining and finely tuned football were not centerpieces to early Super Bowls. Consider that in the first 15 Super Bowls, the average margin of victory was 13.3 points with just four games decided by seven points or fewer. But that looked like edge-of-your-seat stuff compared to what the next 15 brought. During that period, the average margin of victory jumped to 20.1 points, marked by lopsided finals of 38-9, 42-10, 46-10, 49-26, 52-17, and 55-10.

Those results came during a stretch when the Super Bowl provided a clear indication of the NFC's superiority. Teams in that conference played a more punishing, physical style and their AFC adversaries simply could not handle it.

"That, to me, was more of a style mismatch conference-wise," says former 49ers offensive lineman Randy Cross, who won three Super Bowls. "That was during a period when the Bears, the Giants, and us were pretty damn dominating physically. And the AFC was a different conference in that regard."

Perhaps hip-hop artist/actress Queen Latifah unknowingly had that history in mind when, during a news conference promoting her performance of "America the Beautiful" at Super Bowl XLIV, she said, "I want to see a good game. I don't want a slaughter. I want it to be competitive."

She got her wish. The Saints' 31-17 victory over the Colts fulfilled every criteria for a thriller—an upstart team going toe-to-toe with an established league powerhouse,



Super Bowl XLII produced arguably the game's greatest upset and greatest play, as David Tyree's acrobatic on-the-helmet catch against the Patriots' Rodney Harrison set up the Giants' winning touchdown.

Elaine Thompson/AP Images

SEANJOHN

NEW LOOK. NEW FIT. IT'S A NEW DAY.

bold play-calling, a fourth-quarter deadlock, and an electric game-deciding moment (Tracy Porter's 74-yard interception return for a touchdown). Last year's Super Bowl was similarly suspenseful with the Steelers' rousing comeback finally extinguished by Green Bay in the closing moments.

Dig a little deeper and you can add Super Bowl XXXIV, when the Rams went ahead of the Titans in the final two minutes, then held on when Mike Jones tackled an outstretched Kevin Dyson at the 1-yard line as time ran out. And how about Super Bowl XXXVIII, when the Panthers matched the Patriots blow for blow in the fourth quarter until Adam Vinatieri's game-winning field goal in the final seconds. Even the Colts' Super Bowl XLI victory over the Bears was in question until Kelvin Hayden's interception return for a score midway through the final quarter.

As a result, media and fans now approach the game with less cynicism and a willingness to believe that even a presumptive favorite can fall. Advertisers, long quick to gobble up commercial time during the Super Bowl, have done so with even greater speed in recent years.

"When was the last time you heard the argument about the NFC being the more physically dominant conference?" asks Cross. "I can't remember that even being brought up in the last five, six years. Which is the dominant conference? Every time you start talking about that, it's so intermixed and so intermingled, that it really doesn't matter."

There are many theories why recent Super Bowls, and especially those played in the last decade, have generally been far better than their predecessors. Here are some to ponder:

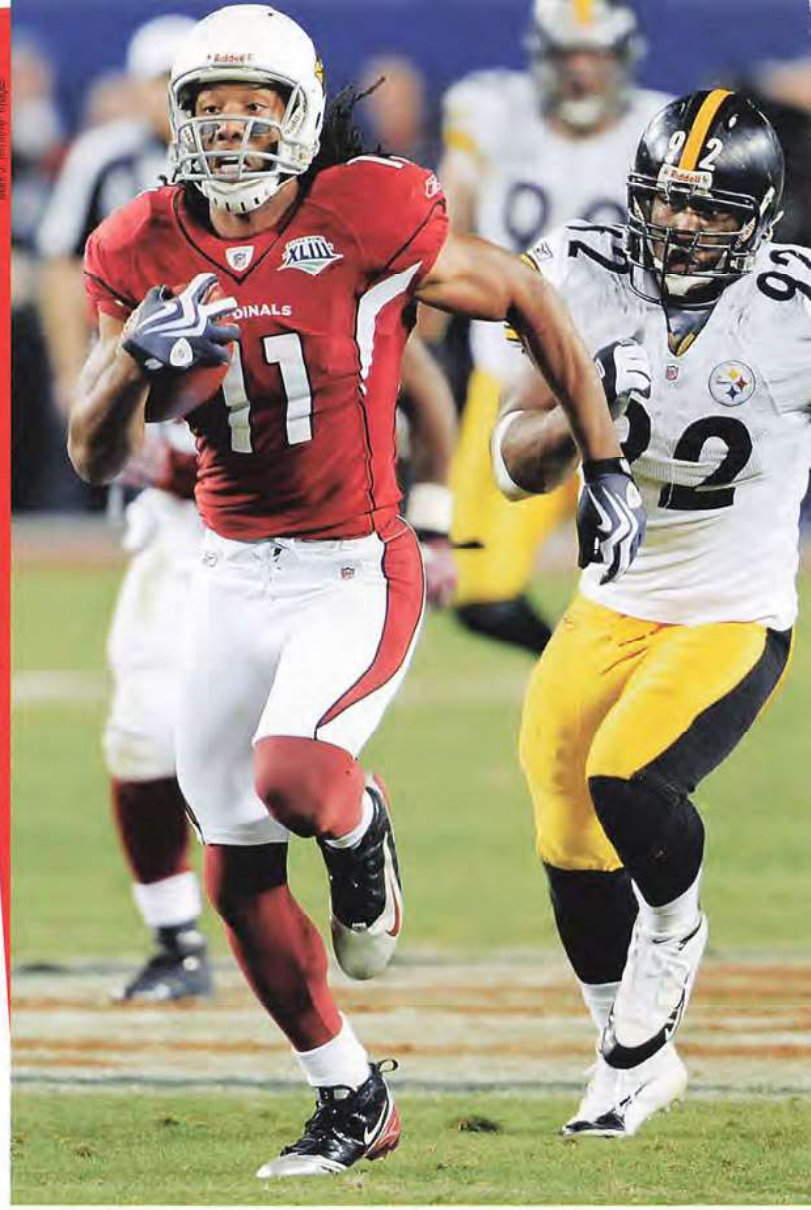
FREE AGENCY

This is front and center in the equation. Since being adopted in 1993, unrestricted free agency has greatly leveled the NFL playing field. With so much roster turnover each year, teams aren't able to build to a point where they have overwhelmingly better talent (and can keep it intact) than most of their opponents. Super Bowl champions, in particular, get raided by the competition. The Packers lost four players to free agency who started in their Super Bowl XLV victory: offensive guard Daryn Colledge (to the Cardinals); fullback Korey Hall (Saints); running back Brandon Jackson (Browns); and defensive tackle Cullen Jenkins (Eagles).

ELIMINATION OF THE UNEXPECTED

Even first-time Super Bowl teams tend to be well prepared for what awaits them. Through a multitude of resources, they can find out almost everything they need to know about preparing for, and dealing with, the challenges that the Super Bowl creates.

Teams know all about the intensified media commitments for players and coaches that begin with Tuesday's Media Day and run through Friday morning. And whatever information these teams don't get directly from the league, they can easily find elsewhere.



Mark J. Rebilas/AP Images

A stunning 64-yard touchdown catch by Larry Fitzgerald (above) gave the Cardinals a fourth-quarter lead in **Super Bowl XLIII**, only to see the Steelers answer in the final minute on Santonio Holmes' end zone grab.

Chris O'Meara/AP Images

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"It's an incestuous league, so you've got a lot of coaches on a lot of staffs who have been to the Super Bowl, been through the distractions, been through the hoopla," says Steve Tasker, who played in four Super Bowls with the Buffalo Bills. "And coaches call around the league and get advice from guys who have already been there.

"They ask, 'What can we expect?' And the answer is, 'Hey, listen, your practice facility is going to be a problem. Install the game plan during the [first] week, so that it'll be all done by Super Bowl week.'

"A lot of teams are preparing for the game the same way."

Green Bay Packers coach Mike McCarthy has always sought Super Bowl advice from other coaches. He did so even before leading his team to its Super Bowl XLV glory. But that didn't necessarily mean he implemented all of the ideas he heard.

"You have to stay true to how your football team has been trained as far as the scheduling and so forth," he says. "There were a number of things that were brought to the table where I thought, 'That's an excellent idea, but it just doesn't fit to what I felt was in the best interest of our football team leading up to this game.'"

PLAYERS ARE MORE USED TO THE SPOTLIGHT

With expanded television coverage of college regular-season and bowl games, a large number of NFL players already have been exposed to big audiences and an abundance of media attention by the time they reach the league. For that matter, numerous players have been on center stage since high school—with all-star games, recruiting, signing day, and high-profile bowl appearances.

"It's not that the Super Bowl isn't the biggest game, but there's much less of a mystique about what it's going to feel like," Cross says. "If you took players who were in the BCS National Championship Game, and if they were to go to the playoffs or a Super Bowl the next year, you'd probably be pretty hard-pressed to get them to say that it's something they've never experienced before."

BETTER QUARTERBACKING ON BOTH SIDES

Sure, the fact that Brady has played in four of the last 10 Super Bowls has helped raise the bar. But think back to the QBs who've been part of the close Super Bowls during the past decade. We've had: Brady vs. Warner; Brady vs. Jake Delhomme; Brady vs. Donovan McNabb; Eli Manning vs. Brady; Ben Roethlisberger vs. Warner; Drew Brees vs. Peyton Manning; and Aaron Rodgers vs. Roethlisberger. That's an impressive list of all-stars and potential Hall of Famers.

COACHES LOOSENING THEIR GRIP

Make no mistake. Football coaches are as big on control as ever.

It's just that many of them have realized that it's better to back off a bit during the Super Bowl. They've seen the adverse effects when coaches such as Dick Vermeil kept his Eagles sequestered and pushed them extra hard in practice before their lopsided loss to the Oakland Raiders in Super Bowl XV. (Vermeil learned that lesson, too, and handled Super Bowl XXXIV, when he coached the Rams, much differently.)

They saw how well the 49ers performed with the far more casual approach of Bill Walsh, who once dressed up like a bellhop and greeted his players as they arrived at their Detroit hotel for Super Bowl XVI.

"I think coaches have come to grips with the fact that what you want to control and what you're going to control are two completely different things," Cross says. "And I think it's really

Mike Groll/AP Images

When Tracy Porter ended a late Colts scoring threat with his 74-yard interception return for a touchdown, it sewed up the Saints' victory in **Super Bowl XLIV**.

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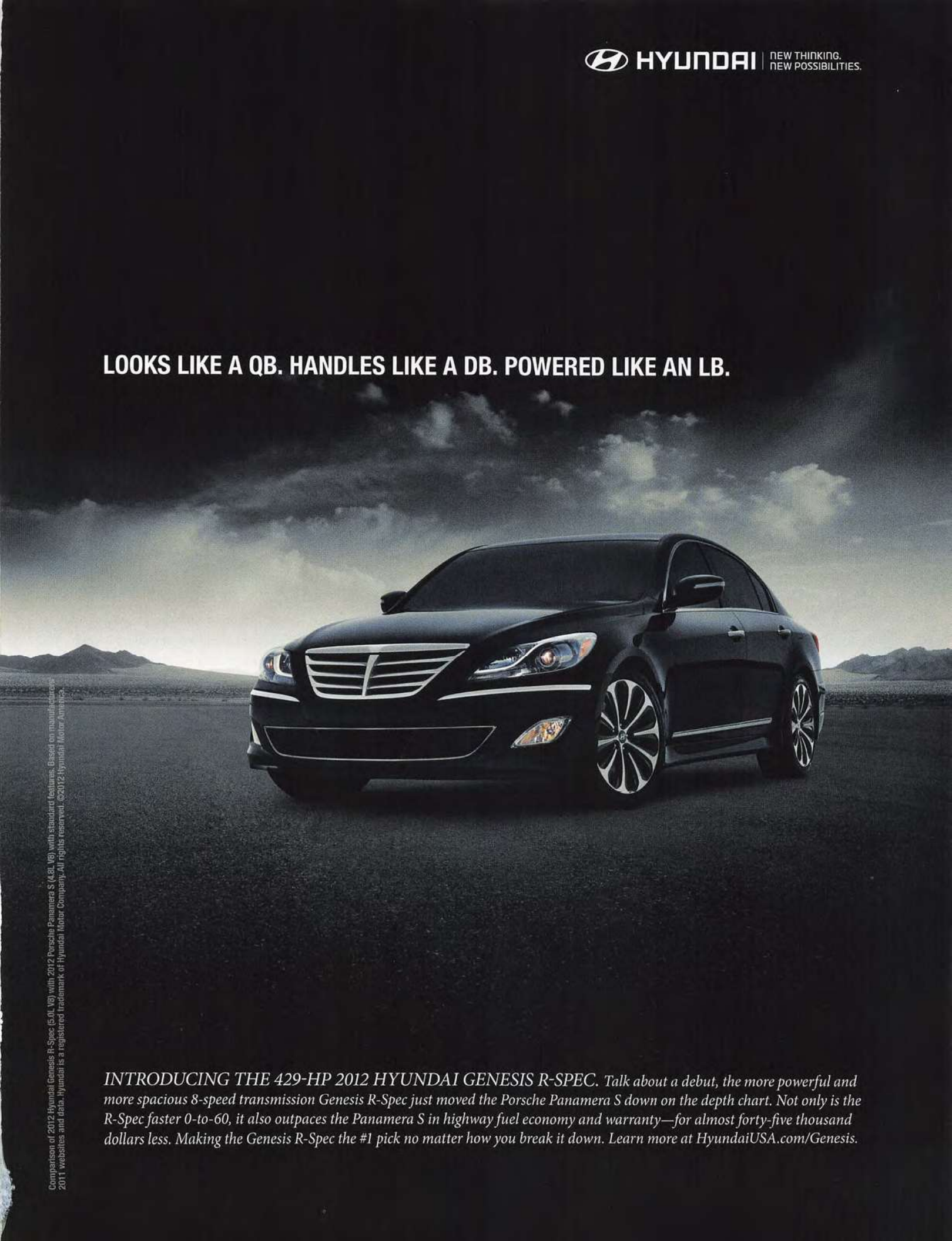

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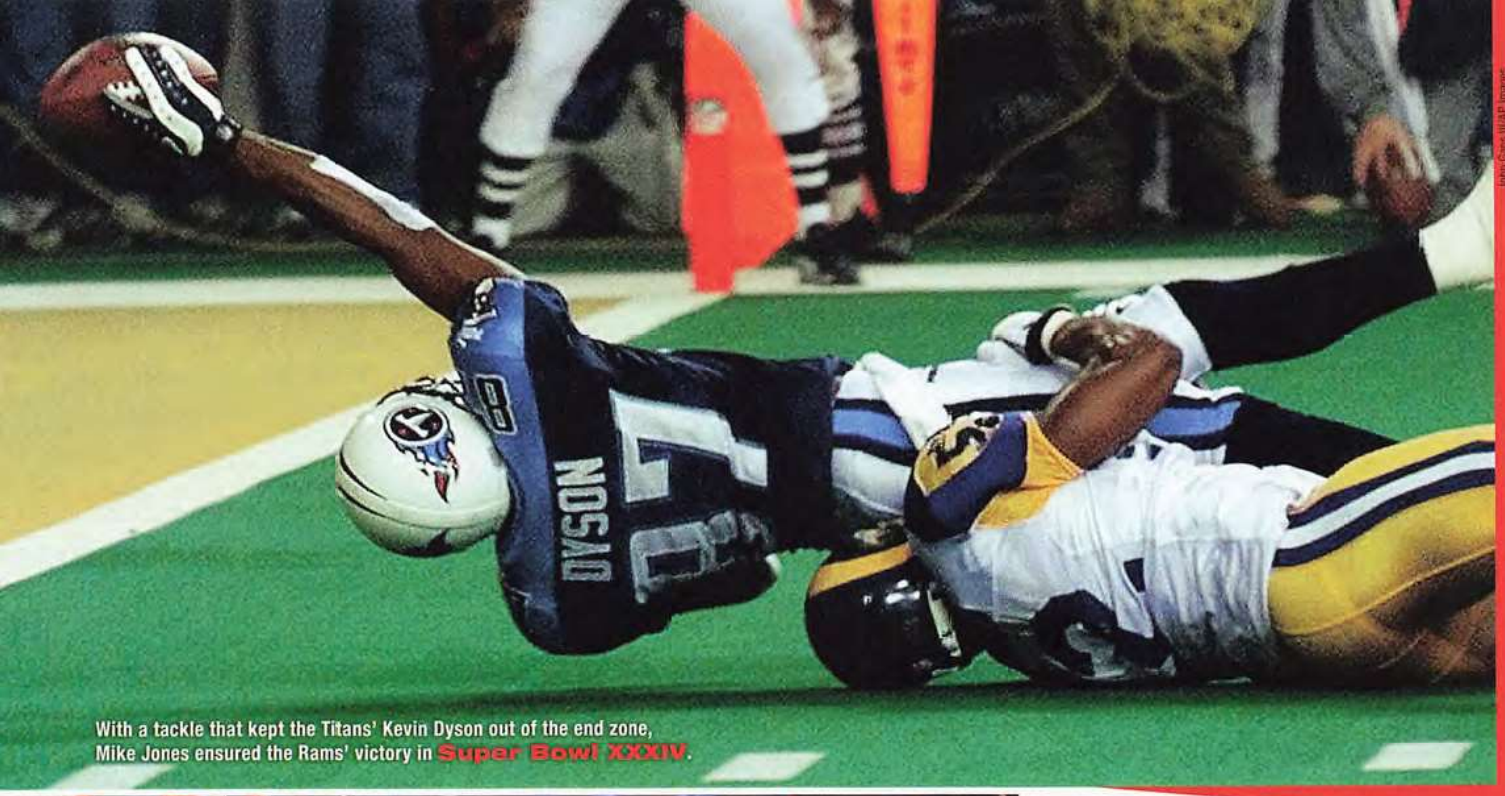


John Gaps III/AP Images

With a tackle that kept the Titans' Kevin Dyson out of the end zone, Mike Jones ensured the Rams' victory in **Super Bowl XXXIV**.

Clay Matthews (left) and Aaron Rodgers soak up the postgame adulation, but the Packers' celebration of beating the Steelers in **Super Bowl XLV** couldn't start until the team's defense got that final stop.

Mark Humphrey/AP Images

beneficial in those big games because the players take ownership in it, they are part of it. You're not being treated like a 10-year-old. You're being treated more like an adult and an equal."

McCarthy, former Colts head coach Tony Dungy, Pittsburgh's Mike Tomlin, Arizona's Ken Whisenhunt, and the Saints' Sean Payton are also recognized for their deft handling of players before the Super Bowl. The fact they are former players (Dungy, Whisenhunt, and Payton have NFL experience, while Tomlin played in college) allowed them to relate better to their teams.

Payton, in fact, proudly admits that he "flat-out plagiarized" Walsh's bellhop routine before his Saints beat the Colts in Super Bowl XLIV. But he gave it a little twist. In addition to dressing up as a bellhop himself to greet players as they arrived at the Saints' hotel, he also had the team's Pro Bowl selections (who had come to Miami early to help promote the all-star game being played there) don bellhop uniforms.

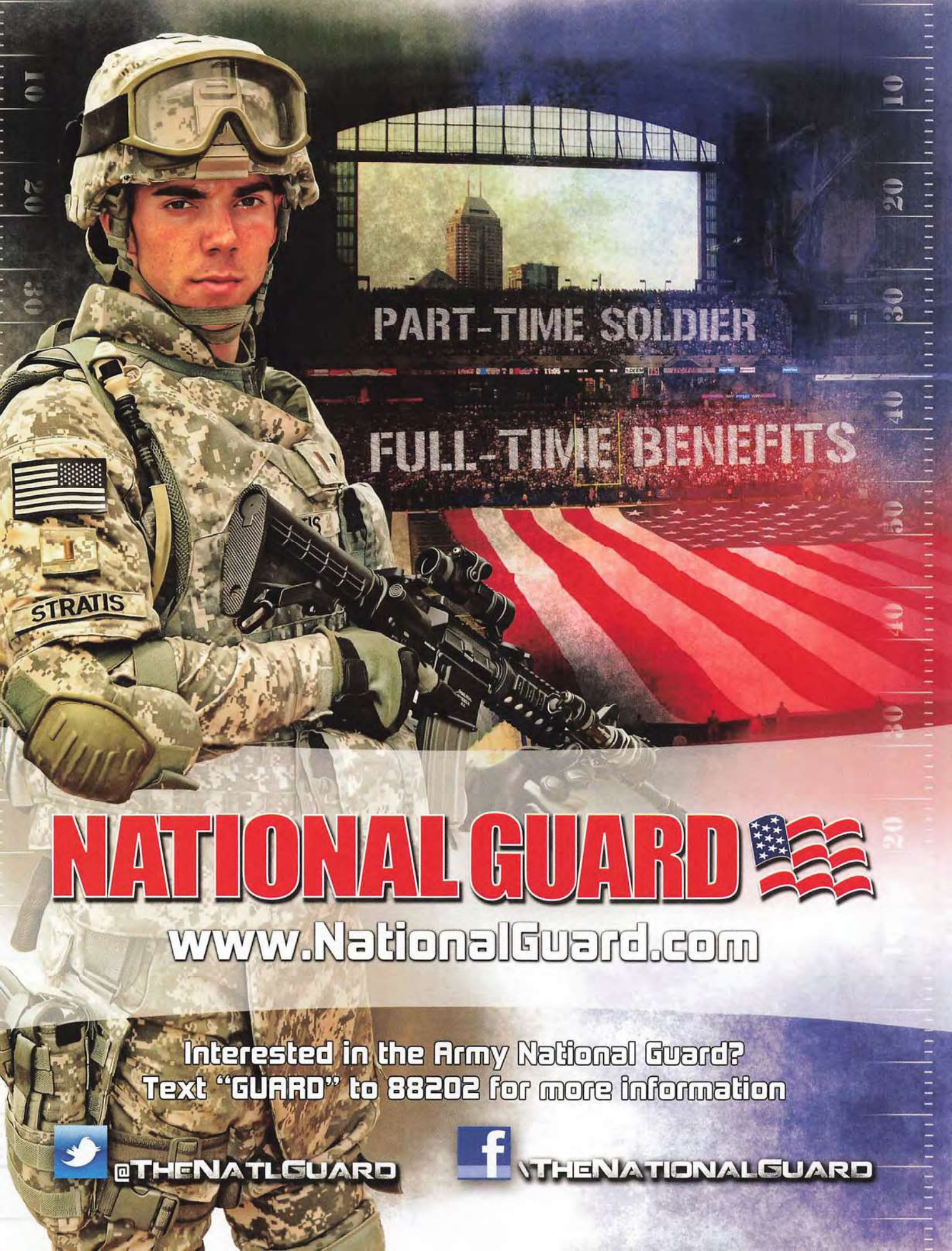
"We had a little trouble getting a few (uniforms) to fit, but I thought it was good," he says. "The message was, 'Hey, let's relax a little bit here. We've got a big week in front of us.'"

When Tomlin became the Steelers' coach in 2007, he took a drill sergeant-like approach. He ran an extremely tough training camp and was big on having his players practice in pads. His theory was that it's easier to be tough at the start, when you're establishing your presence, and back off later. That's exactly what he did in guiding the Steelers to Super Bowl XLIII when the team won its record sixth title, and it's probably why they made another Super Bowl last year.

"I think [Tomlin] does a good job of letting the coaches coach and the players play," says Steelers linebacker James Farrior. "He doesn't try to do too much as far as micro-managing everything."

As long as Super Bowl coaches continue to take such an approach, there's a better chance that the Monday morning conversation will center on what happened during the game than about the halftime show...or even the funny commercials.

Vic Carucci is the senior editor for the Cleveland Browns. He has covered the NFL for 32 years and is a past president of the Professional Football Writers of America. He's authored eight books about football and is a regular host and analyst on SiriusXM NFL Radio.



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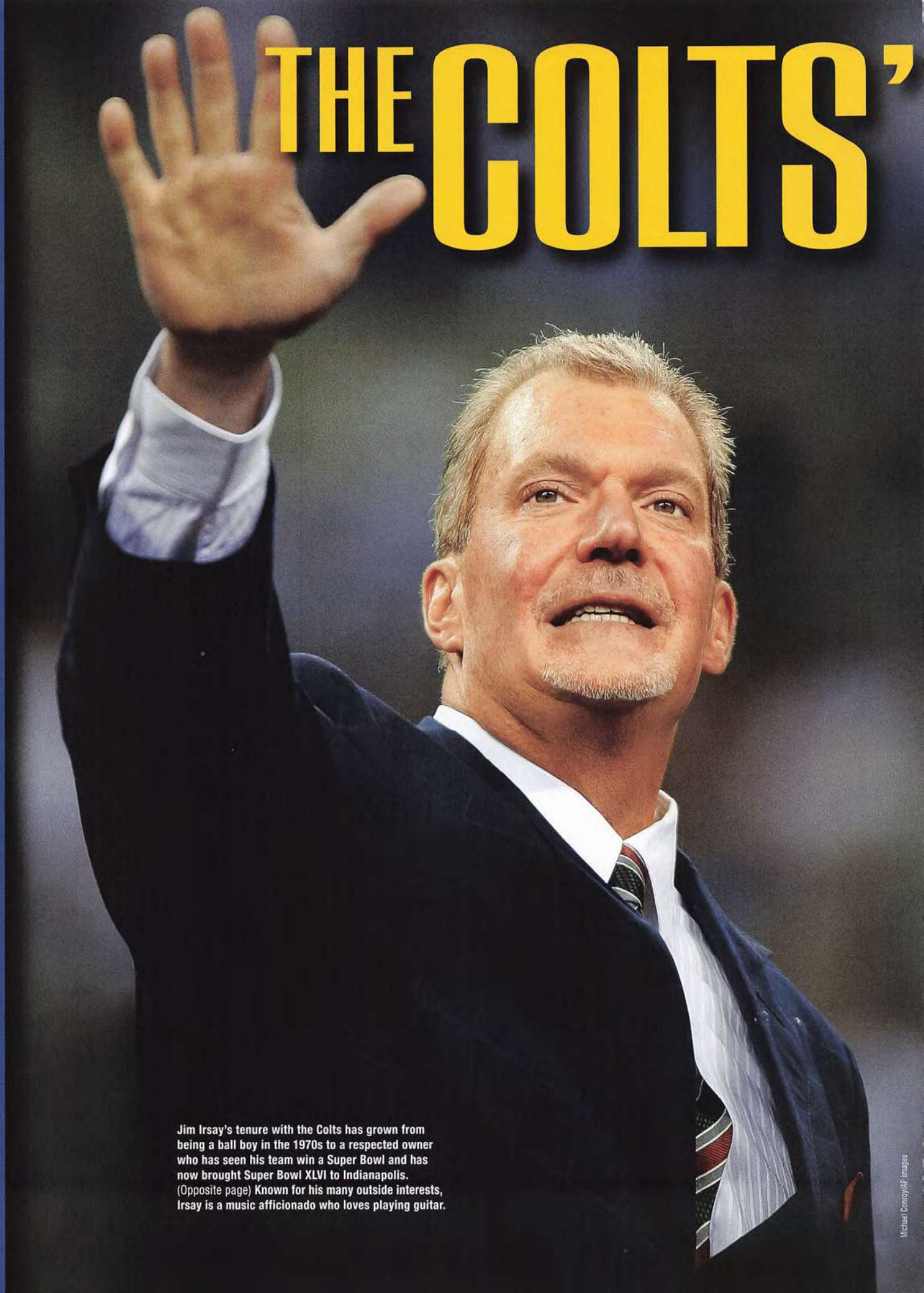

Jim Irsay's tenure with the Colts has grown from being a ball boy in the 1970s to a respected owner who has seen his team win a Super Bowl and has now brought Super Bowl XLVI to Indianapolis. (Opposite page) Known for his many outside interests, Irsay is a music afficionado who loves playing guitar.

Michael Conroy/AP Images

PACE SETTER

JIM IRSAY CHERISHES HIS ROLES AS AN NFL OWNER AND A LEADER IN THE COMMUNITY.

by Tom Rietmann

Two years ago, the Colts organization invited its 1975 team to Indianapolis for a special weekend. Quarterback Bert Jones, running back Lydell Mitchell, and nearly 40 other former players showed up to reminisce and again celebrate that year's AFC Eastern Division championship. Colts owner Jim Irsay, who remembers that season as "magical," gave each player a commemorative ring and his thanks.

For Irsay, it was like a family reunion.

"Those guys took a kid into their inner sanctum and raised me within the game," says Irsay, recalling his days as a teenage ball boy and training camp aide. "They were my older brothers. What a blessing to learn the game that way. They would tell me, 'When you're an owner someday, don't forget this and don't forget that.'

"It was a golden time for me. I think what defines me as an owner are those things that happened in the '70s."

Michael Conroy/AP Images

Irsay, son of late Colts owner Robert Irsay, has gone on to make a huge imprint in the NFL. Entering the 2011 season, his Colts had won one Super Bowl, played in another, and reached the playoffs 11 times in a 12-year span, the most of any team. The 52-year-old Irsay, who took over the club when his father passed away in 1997, also was highly instrumental in formulating plans for Lucas Oil Stadium and persuading NFL owners to bring Super Bowl XLVI to Indianapolis.

He has blossomed into one of the most respected owners in pro football. And to think it all started four decades ago, when he spent his days mopping the locker room floor and patrolling for sweaty jerseys, and his evenings visiting the training camp dormitory and peppering coaches and players with football questions.

"He was so inquisitive," says Ted Marchibroda, who coached the '75 team to nine consecutive victories after a 1-4 start. "I remember one time we even watched film together. He spent a lot of time with the players and had a good relationship with them, even at that age. They respected him."

Irsay is known for staying even-keeled and reflective, even when he's had to make difficult decisions, as was the case at the end of this season with the team's front-office changes. His father, not so much. Robert Irsay, who bought the Colts in 1972, was a smart and energetic businessman who made his fortune in heating and air-conditioning. But as an NFL owner, he could be volatile and meddlesome.

Sometimes, the son found himself quelling controversies. One happened during the 1976 preseason, in what Jim Irsay calls "a signature moment" in his career. The 17-year-old climbed aboard the team bus following a road loss to Detroit and addressed players who were livid upon hearing that Marchibroda planned to resign after engaging in a postgame argument with the elder Irsay.

"It was a terrible scene," Irsay recalls. "It was like your dad and your brother getting in a fight, and as a younger brother, you're trying to step in and do something."

Marchibroda stayed and coached the Colts to two more division titles in Baltimore. Jim Irsay used his first speech to the team as another learning tool in his progression to NFL ownership. He realized coaches need room to operate, and players require some leeway and understanding to perform at their best.

"Jim grew up with NFL football," says David Frick, an Indianapolis attorney and community leader who was the chief negotiator in bringing the Colts to Indianapolis in 1984. "It's an amazing story how he matured into what I think is one of the best owners in the NFL. He clearly has a good conscience and a good business sense of what it takes to make a football team work."

Fellow owners have noticed, too. They saw Irsay become the league's youngest general manager at age 24. They saw him orchestrate a trade for running back Eric Dickerson in 1987, one of the biggest and most complicated deals in NFL history. They observed as he gleaned lessons about the game's business side from his father, helped set up the NFL salary cap system, and hired one of the league's top executives, Bill Polian, to lead the team's football decisions.

"For me, Jim has been one of the most fascinating guys to watch over the years," Cincinnati Bengals owner Mike Brown says. "He was a scout, then a general manager, and now is an owner. I thought he was a good scout and a good general manager. But I'll tell you this: He's an excellent owner.

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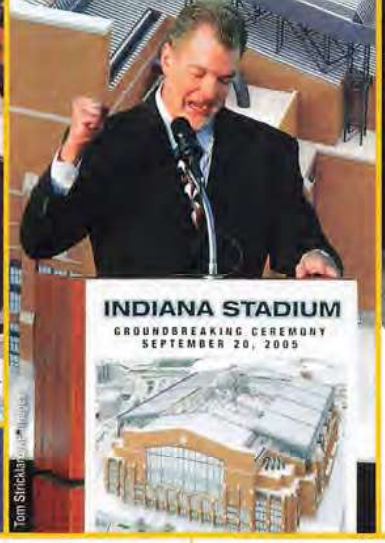


Tom Strickland/AP Images

An avid collector and reader, Irsay purchased the original manuscript of Jack Kerouac's *On The Road.*

Ann Heisenfelt/AP Images

(Above) **Irsay, flanked by then-coach Tony Dungy and NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell, hoists the Lombardi Trophy.** (Right) **Irsay speaks at the Colts stadium groundbreaking.**

"He has sympathy and understanding for different people in different roles," adds Brown. "He has grown to be a guy who has as good a handle on the big picture as anyone I can think of."

There are many facets to Irsay. His close connection to rock-'n'-roll stars such as Stephen Stills and John Mellencamp and his love for guitars and songwriting are well known. He's also a voracious reader—favoring Hunter Thompson, who was a friend, and poet Dylan Thomas—and a collector who paid more than $2 million for the original manuscript of Jack Kerouac's *On The Road.*

A graduate of Southern Methodist University, where he made the football team as a walk-on linebacker, Irsay also enjoys challenging himself in physical ways. He's competed as a marathon runner and a powerlifter. As a teen growing up in Winnetka, Ill., he and his friends made regular trips to the toughest neighborhoods of Chicago to participate in boxing matches at the top inner-city gyms. They fought with 8-ounce gloves and no headgear.

"You go in that ring, it is one frightening proposition," Irsay says. "You get in there and get off that stool, there are no teammates. The lesson is for you to try to conquer fear, because so much fear is standing in your way."

There is a compassionate and charitable side to Irsay, too. He has lost two siblings—a handicapped older brother who died in 1999 and an older sister who died in an automobile accident at age 15. A few years ago, when New York Jets owner Woody Johnson suddenly lost his 30-year-old daughter, Irsay was one of the first NFL people to call. Their hour-long conversation, Johnson says, "was very helpful to me. He was excellent and took the time to do it."

Irsay, who chairs the NFL's legislative committee and also is a member of the finance committee and the Super Bowl advisory committee, travels often and never fails to leave $100 bills for the hotel workers.

"My grandmother on my mom's side was poor and raised five kids while she was an inner-city maid," Irsay recalls. "I keep my eyes open to people in service work and those types of things. I love to leave a hand-written note acknowledging the work they do. They are the people who make this country."

He also can be a voice of reason. When the Colts and the city of Indianapolis negotiated the building of Lucas Oil Stadium, the talks went through some difficult stages. Heading up the city's team were then-mayor Bart Peterson and Fred Glass, at the time chairman of the Capital Improvement Board and now the director of athletics at Indiana University. Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels joined in and came up with a funding mechanism that engaged the surrounding counties through a restaurant tax. Frick was on hand for many meetings as executive director of the Indiana Stadium and Convention Building Authority.

"[Irsay] was open to suggestions," Frick says. "He had in his mind what he wanted the building to be. And since the public was paying for the building, we were very conscious of the costs of what he wanted, so there were some tough issues. But Jim brings an approach in which he is searching for solutions. We worked through those issues and got them resolved so we could have a stadium that opened on time (in 2008)."

The retractable-roof facility attracts more than just NFL games to Indianapolis. Like the RCA Dome before it, Lucas Oil Stadium is home to the league's Scouting Combine, which dominates the downtown area every February. It also plays host to basketball's NCAA Final Four in a regular rotation and will be the site of the first five Big Ten championship football games.

"Jim has a great stadium here," San Diego Chargers owner Dean Spanos proclaimed when he visited Indianapolis for NFL meetings in May. "He's hosting a Super Bowl. He has a championship team. I think that says it all in a nutshell how he's very successful."

The Colts made major inroads in the region in 1995, when Marchibroda, in his second stint as head coach, and quarterback Jim Harbaugh led the team to the AFC Championship Game. Then came Tony Dungy and quarterback Peyton Manning to "take it to another level," as Irsay puts it. With interest in high school football on an upswing, the Colts are involved as sponsors of numerous multi-game prep events as well as the state tournament in Lucas Oil Stadium.

"We're very cognizant of our influence," Irsay says. "That brings a lot of joy to [us]. You're really talking about stewardship, your responsibility to the community."

Irsay and his wife, Meg, have three daughters—Carlie, Casey, and Kalen—all of whom are vice presidents for the team. The younger Irsays often accompany their father to NFL meetings. All three stood at his side, too, when Irsay announced the major front-office moves during a news conference in early 2012.

Irsay wants his daughters to gain from the same kind of professional experiences that helped to elevate him through the league ranks. "You see the future there," the Colts owner concludes.

Tom Rietmann worked at The Indianapolis News *and* The Indianapolis Star *for 27 years and covered the Colts for nearly 10 years. He now does freelance work in Indianapolis.*

A LEGACY OF THEIR OWN

IT'S A SELECT GROUP THAT HAS CONQUERED THE PRESSURE OF FOLLOWING A SUPER BOWL CHAMPION.

by Larry Weisman

As the great ones recede into lore, a new generation rises.

It just doesn't rise easily. It carries a burden, an unwieldy construction of dreams, desires, and demands. Repeat the successes of the past. Build on them. Surprise the doubters. Surpass the expectations. Follow the legend but don't erase the legacy.

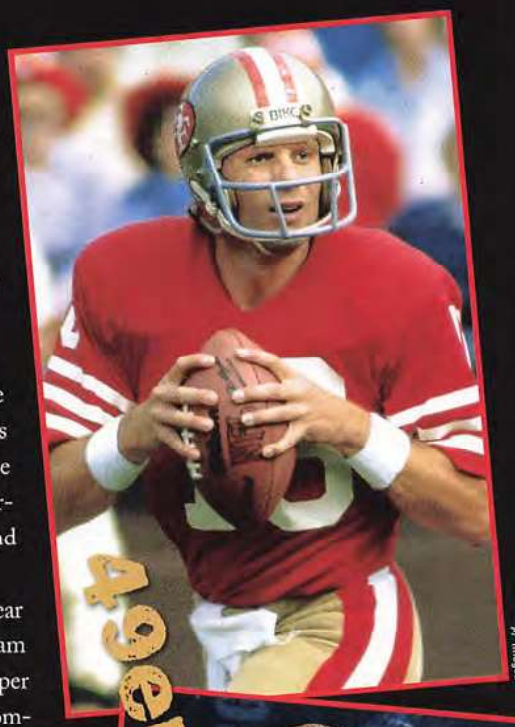
This is no easy balancing act.

Quarterbacks are so often judged by the championships they've won. As Bill Parcells famously asked, "How many pelts does he have on his pony?" And how can a quarterback labor in the shadow of a great one and then create his own niche in history?

Aaron Rodgers accomplished that last year with the Packers. In quarterbacking his team to a 31-25 victory over the Steelers in Super Bowl XLV, Rodgers brought the Vince Lombardi Trophy back to its seemingly rightful home, where it last rested when Brett Favre piloted the Pack to a triumph over the Patriots in Super Bowl XXXI. And he did something Favre never accomplished: he won the Super Bowl MVP trophy by virtue of his three touchdown passes and 304 yards through the air.

For three years, Rodgers sat the bench behind Favre. He was always the heir apparent after being drafted in the first round in 2005. Yet he could do little more than wait for the NFL's iron man to show a little rust and wear out his welcome in Green Bay. Then Rodgers had to match Favre's achievement—win a championship—after directly succeeding him as the starter.

"I've been told it's pretty unusual," Rodgers says. "I think I'm fortunate to be surrounded by a number of very talented men—coaches and players."



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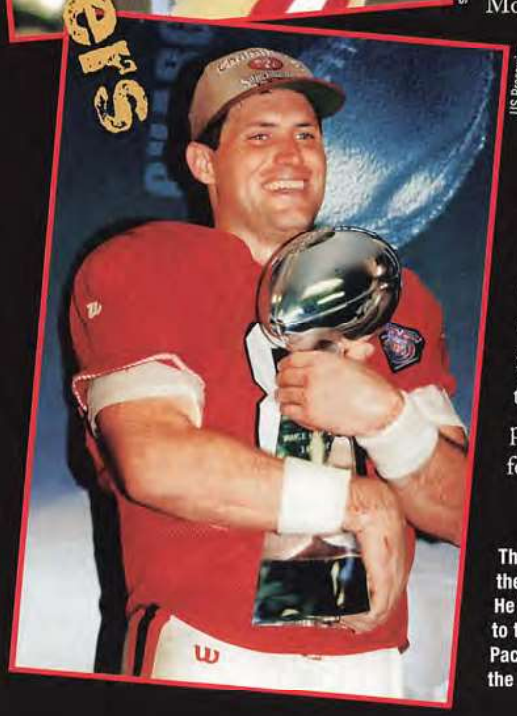


US Presswire

It's unusual and not so unusual. Look at the company Rodgers kept during last season's postseason run: Steve Young.

Young, who replaced Joe Montana with the 49ers, constructed his own body of work that got him into the Pro Football Hall of Fame, his legacy enhanced by throwing six touchdown passes in Super Bowl XXIX. No wonder Rodgers turned to Young for counsel during his own hectic drive toward the NFL title. As a kid in California, Rodgers worshiped the Niners and, ironically enough, Montana.

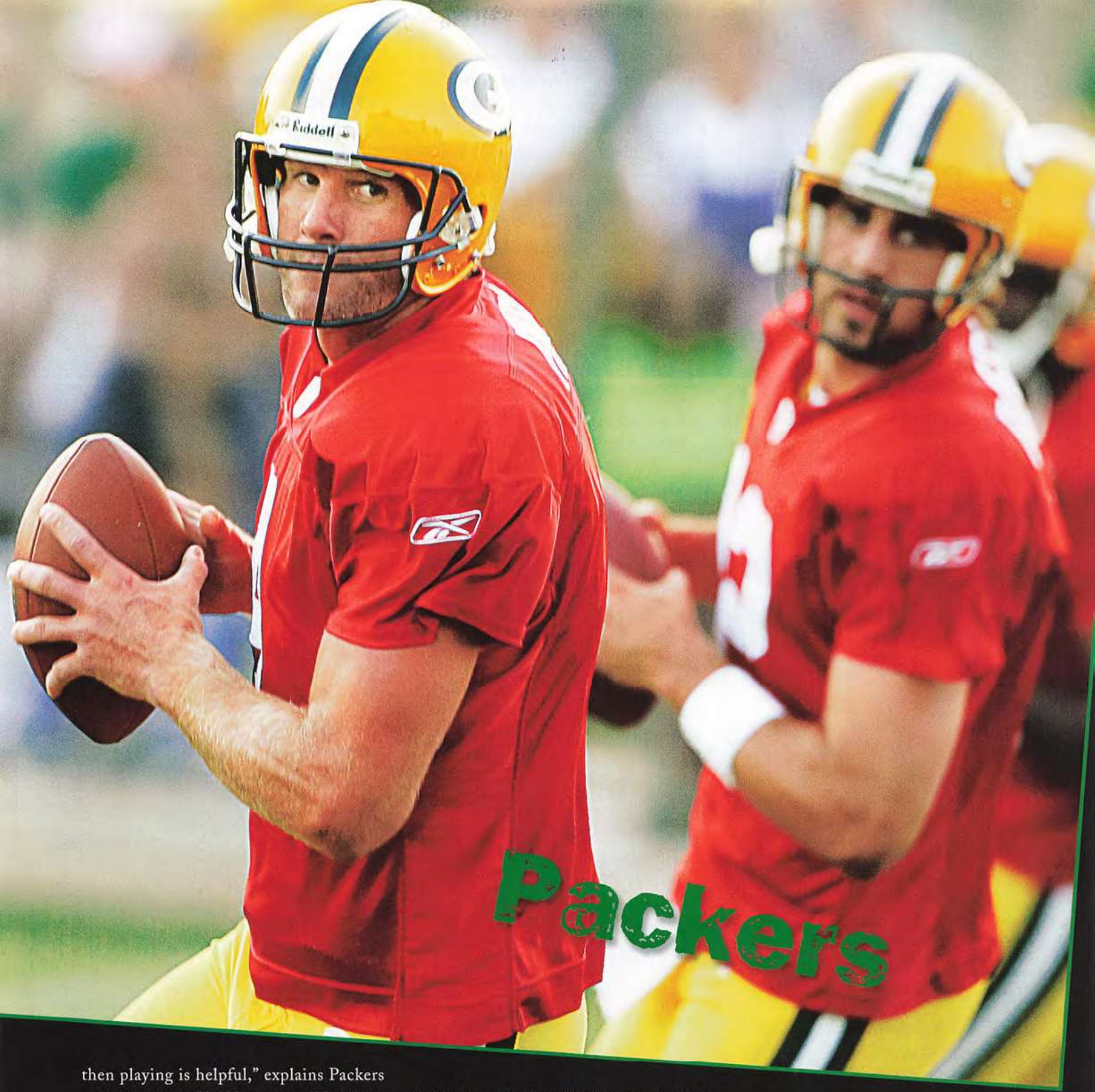
"Steve went through a similar situation in San Francisco," Rodgers says. "He has been a great guy to lean on for advice. I was a 49ers fan growing up and, obviously, I was a huge Joe Montana fan up until he retired. To see the way Steve played and pick up right where [Montana] left off, and to win an MVP and a Super Bowl, it's been great to know him as a friend now."

Montana did not easily give way to Young and their relationship frosted before the 49ers dealt Montana to the Chiefs, finally ending the controversy. It was a lengthy and difficult apprenticeship for Young, as was Rodgers' under Favre, though Young at least got opportunities to play. Favre never missed a start and rarely fell prey to injury.

"In some ways, sitting for three years and

Morry Gash/AP Images

The 49ers dominated the NFL during the '80s behind the expert quarterbacking of Joe Montana (top). He then gave way to Steve Young, who led the team to the Super Bowl XXIX crown. (Opposite page) **The Packers had a similar situation with Brett Favre in the lead role and Aaron Rodgers in the background.**



then playing is helpful," explains Packers general manager Ted Thompson. "That's the way it was back in the day. You always brought quarterbacks in and developed them for about two or three years before you actually played them. That's hard to do anymore."

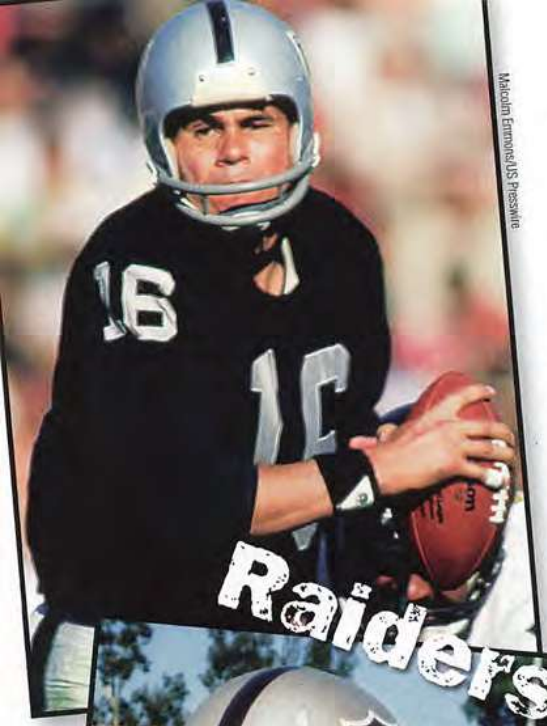
Some teams adopted another approach, acquiring older quarterbacks and keeping them around as an insurance policy. Look at the Raiders and Jim Plunkett. Drafted No. 1 overall in 1971 by the Patriots, Plunkett was released by the 49ers at the end of the 1978 training camp before being picked up by the Raiders to back up Ken Stabler, who had guided them to victory in Super Bowl XI.

Plunkett did not throw a single pass during the '78 season. He threw only 15 the following year. Then the Raiders traded Stabler to the Oilers for their next starting quarterback, Dan Pastorini, while rejecting Plunkett's bid to be dealt.

Plunkett called it "the worst moment of my career." The Raiders didn't see it that way and, ultimately, neither would Plunkett. Pastorini suffered a broken leg five weeks into the 1980 season, and in came the rusty, old (age 33) warhorse to throw five interceptions in his first game. But Plunkett stepped it up and so did the Raiders, winning nine of their last 11 games, reaching the playoffs as a Wild Card, and prevailing in Super Bowl XV with a 27-10 beating of the Eagles.

And what did Plunkett do in that game? He passed for 261 yards and three touchdowns to earn Most Valuable Player honors.

Then-NFL Commissioner Pete Rozelle



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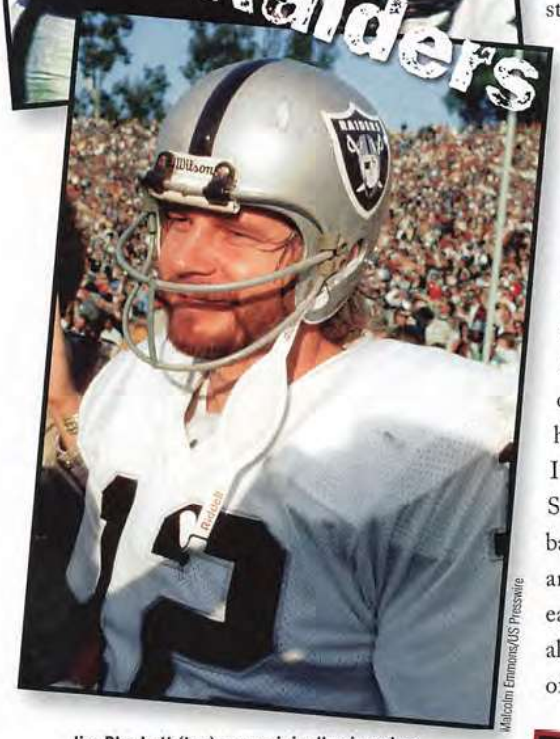


Malcolm Emmons/US Presswire

Jim Plunkett (top) was originally signed as insurance for the Raiders behind starter Ken Stabler, the winning QB in Super Bowl XI. Plunkett, though, ended up starring in two Super Bowl victories for the team.

put the marvelous climb from the pit to the penthouse in perspective.

"I know of no athlete in the history of sport who has made a greater comeback than Jim Plunkett," he said.

Nothing succeeds like succession… and Plunkett couldn't disagree.

"The payoff at the end was quite incredible," he admits.

The end had only begun, though.

Three seasons later, with the Raiders now ensconced in Los Angeles, Plunkett added a second title to his late-growing résumé when the Raiders flattened the Redskins, 38-9, in Super Bowl XVIII. Plunkett had been replaced as the team's starter by Marc Wilson, but came off the bench when Wilson got hurt to help the Raiders win six of their last seven games. He then contributed in the Super Bowl with a touchdown pass to Cliff Branch that staked the Raiders to a 14-0 lead, and finished the game 16 of 25 for 172 yards.

"Fortunately for me," Plunkett says, "I got the ring off the merry-go-round not just once, but twice."

The Raiders have always maintained that Plunkett belongs in the Pro Football Hall of Fame. His overall statistics may not bear that out, but he is the only retired quarterback to start and win two Super Bowl games who is not immortalized in Canton, Ohio.

"Jim Plunkett was one of the great players of our time. Won two Super Bowls," said late Raiders owner Al Davis, a Hall of Famer himself. "He never got the acclaim he deserves or desires."

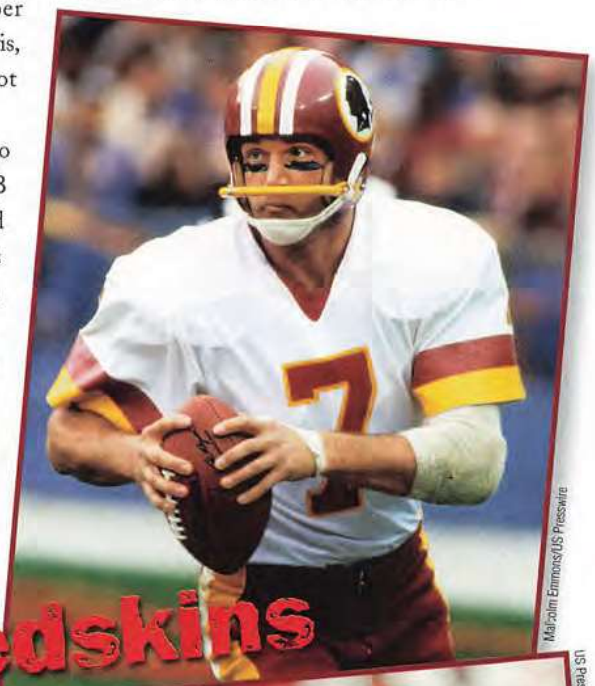
Succession doesn't always lead to success. The departure of the star QB sometimes heralds the exit of the head coach as well. Plunkett won both his titles on Tom Flores' watch after John Madden had coached the team in Super Bowl XI. In Washington, Joe Gibbs won three Super Bowls with three different quarterbacks—Joe Theismann, Doug Williams, and Mark Rypien. They didn't follow each other in neat order, but there was always a cognizance in the organization of the history. Gibbs was the constant.

Powerful as history can be, it might have weighed most on those who followed the glare of Theismann. He won that elusive first one—the franchise's first NFL title in four decades—against the Dolphins in Super Bowl XVII.

Williams dealt gracefully with endless questions about the radical concept of being the first black quarterback in the Super Bowl. He also overcame a sprained knee to engineer a comeback from a 10-0 deficit to lead a 42-10 blowout of the Broncos in Super Bowl XXII.

Rypien stepped in with a powerful, veteran team that pass-protected beautifully and perfectly suited his strong-armed style, delivering

(Clockwise from below) **The Redskins' Super Bowl title run began with Joe Theismann behind center for Super Bowl XVII. Strong-armed Mark Rypien was the starter for their Super Bowl XXVI victory, while it was Doug Williams pulling off the feat in Super Bowl XXII.**



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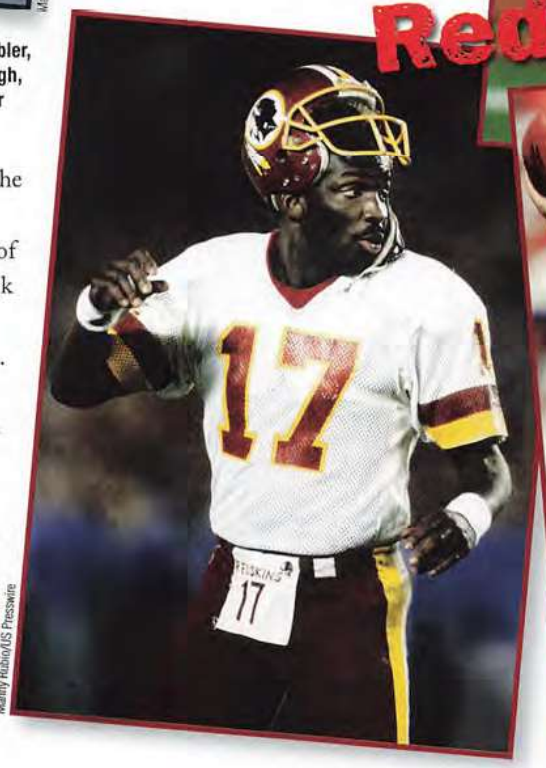

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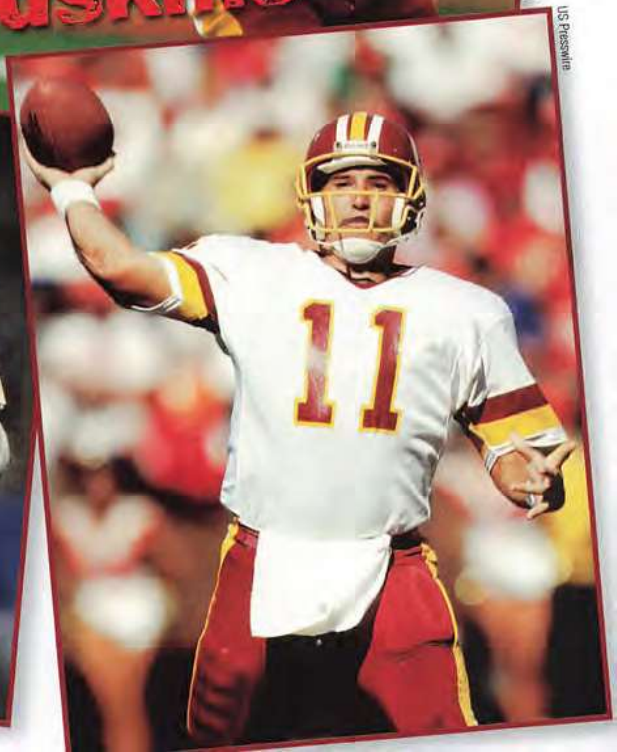

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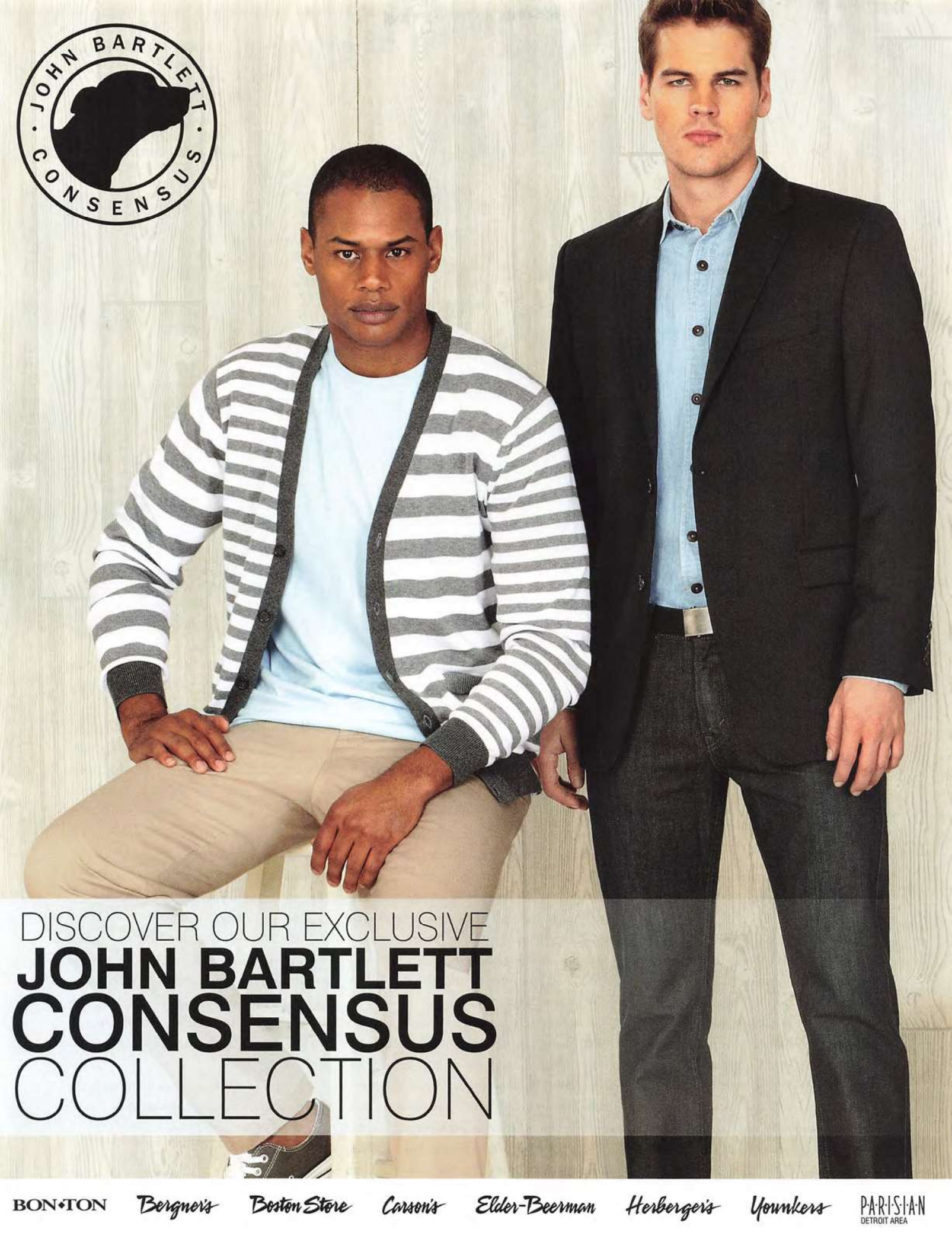
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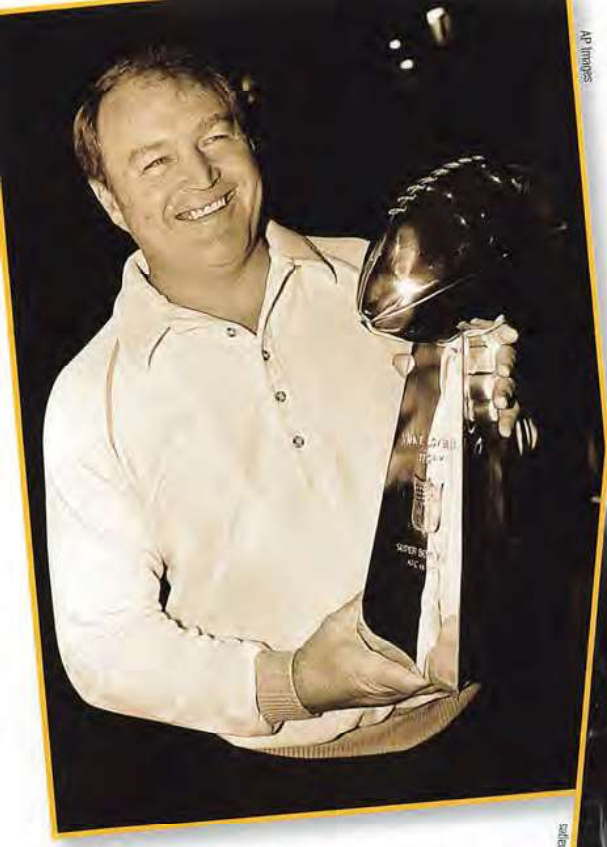

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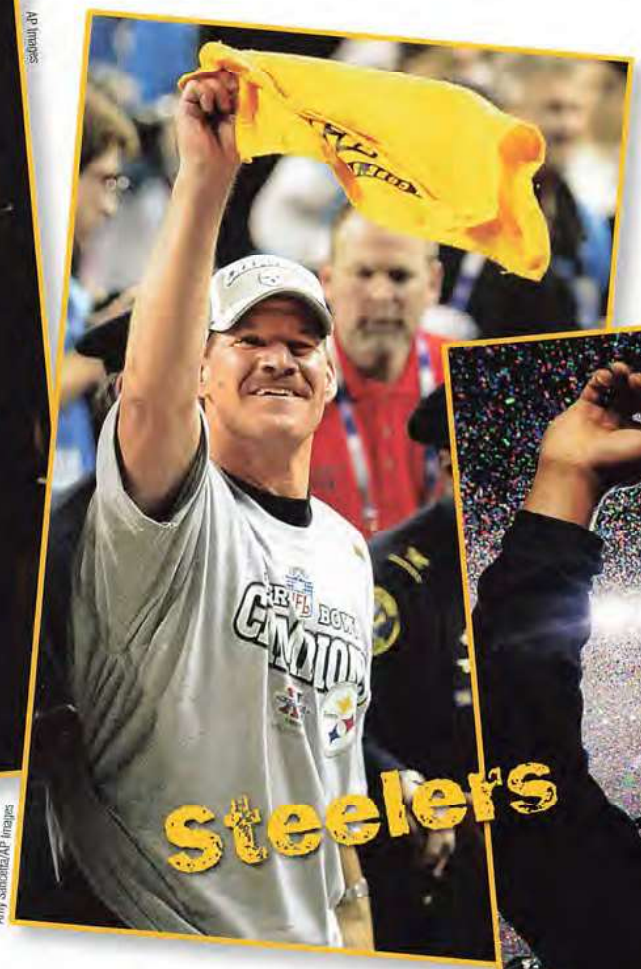

Amy Sancetta/AP Images

David J. Phillip/AP Images

Continuity has been at the core of Pittsburgh's success through the years. The team's three head coaches since 1969 – (left to right) Chuck Noll, Bill Cowher, and Mike Tomlin – have each delivered Super Bowl titles. Noll's four championships in six years remains an NFL standard.

the crown in XXVI against the Bills. Rypien and Williams both won MVP honors for their Super Bowl performances.

At times, the succession under center needs to accelerate more rapidly than the normal process of drafting, grooming, and plugging in the new kid as the wily veteran fades away. In 1990, the Giants' Phil Simms—the hero of Super Bowl XXI—suffered a broken foot in a December game, leaving Jeff Hostetler, who had thrown only 109 passes in six seasons, in charge of a team with title aspirations.

Hostetler started and won the last two regular-season games, won two more in the NFC playoffs, and helmed the gripping 20-19 win over the Bills in Super Bowl XXV. Like the rest of his team that day, Hostetler was efficient, completing 20 of 32 passes for 222 yards, 14 of those on a second-quarter touchdown pass to Stephen Baker.

If history did drop a weight on a player's shoulders, you would bet on it happening most in Green Bay. Rodgers not only had Favre's achievements as a spur, but the franchise's entire past staring him in the face.

"When you walk into your building every day and see pictures of Curly Lambeau, Vince Lombardi, and Mike Holmgren, it's a reminder that our history is among us at all times," says Packers head coach Mike McCarthy. "It creates a standard and expectations that fit right along with our vision."

History and culture. Think they don't drive intense men intensely? When Mike Tomlin took over as the Steelers' head coach in 2007, he knew that he was only the third man to fill that role since 1969 and that Chuck Noll won four Super Bowls and Bill Cowher one of the two he helped the Steelers reach. Succession and success. In his first four years, Tomlin won one title and narrowly missed another.

Look at how the Raiders went from Madden to Flores and continued to achieve. Or the way the 49ers won three Super Bowls under the brilliant Bill Walsh and then turned to his long-time defensive coordinator, George Seifert, to maintain the continuity. The 49ers would come away with two more titles under Seifert. They even notched back-to-back baubles, completing the transition by swamping the Broncos, 55-10, in Super Bowl XXIV, one year after beating the Bengals in Walsh's swan song.

The handoff from coach to coach, or quarterback to quarterback, can be tricky. Especially if the one on the way out isn't quite ready to leave. Favre's annual consideration of retirement, followed by actual retirements and un-retirements, wore the Packers out.

They also needed to know what they had in Rodgers after three seasons and limited playing time. So they girded themselves for the cataclysm in 2008, trading Favre to the New York Jets and handing the keys to this high-powered engine to Rodgers.

"In any sort of personnel decision that you make, you're always hoping that it works out," says the Packers' Thompson. "There's always some chance [that it won't]. You try to make the best decision you can and move on."

Rodgers said as little as possible as the drama played out and never tried to be the next Favre. He stuck with being the first Aaron Rodgers. It's worked out pretty well.

"He's everything we thought he would be," says McCarthy. "Personally, how he handled the transition speaks volumes about him as a person and his family and how he was raised.

"[Aaron] took the high road throughout the whole transition. He's a winner. He took the next step in his development as a championship quarterback."

As others did before him, with not only the weight of succession but the wait.

Larry Weisman covered the NFL for USA TODAY *from 1984–2009. He was the Washington Redskins' editorial director during the 2009 and 2010 seasons.*

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FOR ALL THE PATRIOTS

(Background) AP Images/NFL Photos; (Inset) Beth A. Keiser/AP Images

by Vince Casey

HOW A WOUNDED NATION DREW INSPIRATION FROM A TEAM AND AN UNLIKELY CAST OF STARS.

Its boundaries breached by unfathomable acts of treachery, America was stunned on what began as a beautiful September morning.

Those in New York City, Washington DC, and Pennsylvania were joined quickly by millions throughout a waking nation who couldn't completely understand what was happening—even as it unfolded before their eyes. How could they? Ten years later, the images of September 11, 2001, are still met with disbelief.

Was that a plane that had slammed into one of Manhattan's World Trade Towers? Maybe a small one. If so, it had to be a terrible accident.

Then at 9:03 a.m. EDT, the same thing happened to the other tower, and you could see that it was, indeed, a jet plane. And one thing was certain: it was no accident.

A half-hour later, another jet crashed into the Pentagon. Horrifically, at 9:59 a.m., the World Trade Center's South Tower collapsed in a cauldron of concrete, steel, and ash. Moments later, a jet spiraled into the barren fields of western Pennsylvania. A half-hour after that, New York's other tower fell.

In North Attleboro, Mass., the starting right guard of the New England Patriots, Joe Andruzzi, was affixed to his TV screen as the horror developed. He had every reason to be fearful, because he knew that his three brothers—all New York City firemen—could well be involved in the catastrophe taking place.

"I had a gut feeling that my brothers were there," says the now-retired Andruzzi. "I was calling every number I could get hold of."

It turned out his worries were well-founded. His 30-year-old brother Jimmy, the second-oldest of the Andruzzi firemen trio that also included brothers Billy (32) and Marc (24), was indeed "involved."

His Engine 5 company in lower Manhattan joined Engine 10—located right across the street from the towers—as the first units to enter the nightmare that the North Tower had become. Climbing the stairs laden with 160 pounds of equipment, "we heard (at about the 27th floor) the biggest, loudest, most intense sound I'd ever heard in my life," remembers Jimmy. It was the South Tower falling.

Told to leave the North Tower immediately, Jimmy and the rest of Engine 5 made it out about 45 seconds before the building collapsed. Soon, the two other Andruzzi brothers—an "all-hands" call had been issued for New York City firefighters—were digging through the six-story pile of ruins for possible survivors.

Over the next 10 years, things would develop in startling and renewing ways for the country and for Andruzzi's team. America became involved in a war against terrorism, more guarded on the home front, and began to again appreciate its gifts of freedom and equality.

In America's most popular sport—pro football—a 5-11, last-place team from 2000 (Andruzzi's Patriots) was about to turn things around not only for a season, but a decade, led by a player few knew.

The NFL had just completed its first week of games and wrestled with the decision whether to continue its schedule without interruption or postpone Week 2 in honor of those lost and to give fans and the country time to grieve. On Sept. 13, Commissioner Paul Tagliabue, after telling several NFL owners that "this is not the Kennedy assassination, this is not Pearl Harbor—it's worse," announced that the league would not play that weekend. "Our priorities...are to pause, grieve, and reflect," he said.

For one of the rare times in its history, the NFL was "dark" for a week—but far from inactive. On Sept. 20, the league and the NFL Players Association announced they would contribute a minimum of $10 million to 9/11 disaster-relief organizations. When the season resumed on Sept. 23-24, things were in no way "normal," but there was still a yearning for normalcy and a hope that football could help provide it.

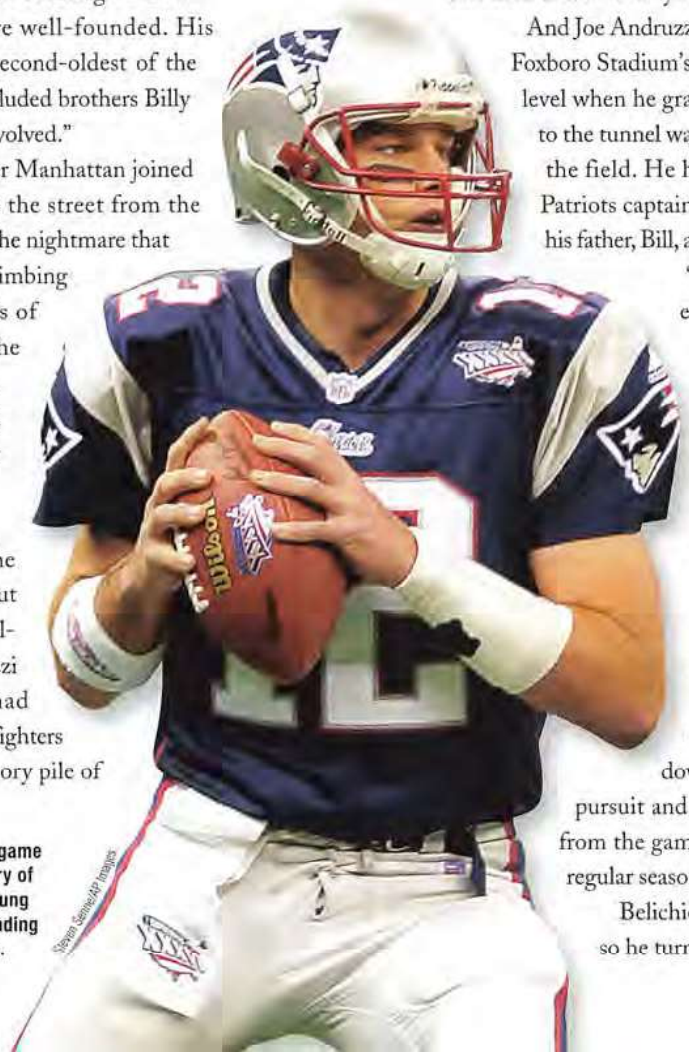
The Patriots hosted the New York Jets that weekend, honoring (as Patriots head coach Bill Belichick described them) "the real heroes who risk their lives on a daily basis to protect the rest of us in society."

And Joe Andruzzi, spurred on by the pregame roar from Foxboro Stadium's 60,292 fans, brought them to another level when he grabbed two small American flags taped to the tunnel wall and held them high as he raced onto the field. He headed straight toward the honorary Patriots captains for the day—his three brothers and his father, Bill, a retired New York City police detective.

"It was one of the proudest moments I ever had in my career, watching Joe come out of that tunnel with two American flags with his family waiting for him," says former Patriots linebacker Tedy Bruschi. "That made me proud to be an American."

Little did they know it at the time, but the course of the New England Patriots was about to change. Late in the fourth quarter of a 3-3 contest, Jets defensive end Shaun Ellis chased Drew Bledsoe toward the sideline as the quarterback scrambled for a first down. Linebacker Mo Lewis was also in pursuit and collided with Bledsoe, knocking him from the game and, as it turned out, the rest of the regular season.

Belichick's options at that point were limited, so he turned to an unheralded 2000 sixth-round

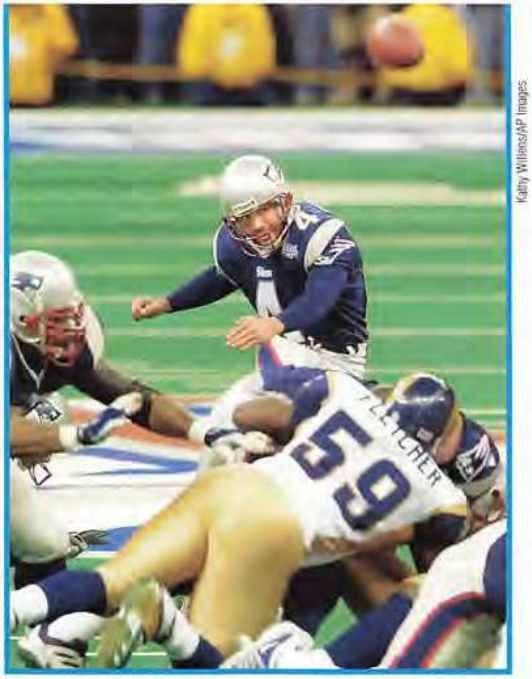


(Opposite page) **At Super Bowl XXXVI, pregame and halftime tributes honored the memory of those killed on September 11, 2001. A young Tom Brady (right) met the challenge of leading the Patriots to their first Super Bowl title.**

draft choice from Michigan who had played in only one game in his short NFL career —a guy named Tom Brady.

The Patriots would lose the game. The next week, though, marked the beginning of a new era and an epic rivalry between quarterbacks and teams. Brady, making his first NFL start, faced Peyton Manning and the Indianapolis Colts, and guided his team to a 44-13 win. His stats were modest — 13 completions in 23 attempts for 168 yards. New England's defense played more of a role; both Otis Smith and Ty Law ran back interceptions for touchdowns.

After a loss to Miami dropped the team to 1-3, Week 5 gave a hint of things to come in 2001 and beyond. Brady (33 of 54, 364 yards, two touchdowns) orchestrated a 10-point fourth-quarter comeback against San Diego, a game won on Adam Vinatieri's overtime field goal.



Kathy Willens/AP Images

Adam Vinatieri's 48-yard field goal in Super Bowl XXXVI launched the Patriots' run of three crowns in four seasons.

The melding of a championship team was taking place. There was the veteran-like savvy of a 24-year-old quarterback...the pounding of running back Antowain Smith (who rushed for 1,157 yards and 12 TDs) ...and a strong and adaptable defense led by end Richard Seymour, linebackers Bruschi, Willie McGinest, and Mike Vrabel, and defensive backs Law and Lawyer Milloy. New England won eight of its final nine games, including the last six, to finish 11-5 and capture the AFC East.

"I think that entire year, Tom showed a calmness, a coolness, a confidence that you really don't expect from a quarterback who was just recently inserted as the starter," says Rodney Harrison, a safety who joined the Patriots in 2003 and spent six seasons as a teammate of Brady. "You knew that he wasn't going to be a 'one-and-done' guy."

The divisional playoff against Oakland was perhaps the franchise's most pivotal moment—from the "What-Football-Was-Meant-to-be-Played-In" weather (a constant, driving snowstorm), to an overturned referee's call on the obscure "tuck rule" that kept the game-tying drive alive, to two clutch Vinatieri field goals to win it.

A week later, in the AFC Championship Game at Pittsburgh, Bledsoe made his first on-field appearance since Week 2. Playing in relief of an injured Brady (ankle), he threw passes like his old self to stake New England to a 14-3 halftime lead. After Pittsburgh trimmed the deficit to 21-17, Bledsoe engineered a crucial 11-play drive capped by Vinatieri's 44-yard field goal for the game's final points.

"I had a horrible backup, that No. 12 guy," Bledsoe kids about Brady. "He didn't understand the 'backup' part."

With that victory, Super Bowl XXXVI had an unexpected guest. For while the NFC was represented by a Rams team seeking its second title in three years, the Patriots had a legion of doubters that followed them all the way to New Orleans. The game would be a rematch of a Week 10 meeting in which the Rams—with their own captivating quarterback story in Kurt Warner and an offense that had produced 500 points three consecutive years—had bested New England, 24-17.

But that was then and this was now, and the NFL was fast learning nothing ever stayed the same with Belichick, especially after a defeat.

"One week they may blitz the whole game, the next week they're playing a 3-4 and then a 4-3 against you," says former Colts head coach Tony Dungy. "Zone coverages, blitzes, they perfectly tailor their game plan to [their opponent]."

The game was a classic. So was the halftime show. The band U2 honored the memory of 9/11 with a set that included "Beautiful Day," "MLK," and "Where the Streets Have No Name," during which a 200-foot screen behind the band scrolled the names of all those killed.

On the field, the Rams had more total yards, 427-267, but the Patriots forced three turnovers and committed none of their own. St. Louis trailed, 17-3, in the fourth quarter, but rallied to tie things up by scoring two touchdowns, the second one with just 1:30 remaining on a 26-yard Warner-to-Ricky Proehl connection.

But then the kid who didn't understand "backup" took over. Brady, with no timeouts left, completed three short passes to reach the Patriots' 41. After an incompletion, two more completions brought the ball to the Rams' 30, where Vinatieri converted a 48-yard field goal for the victory. It was the first Super Bowl won on the final play.

In the game's aftermath, Patriots owner Robert Kraft delivered five simple words that captured the moment. "Today, we are all Patriots," he exulted, a reference to the unity of a healing nation.

Stephan Savoia/AP Images

Former Patriot Joe Andruzzi (second from left) poses with his brothers and his father during ceremonies marking the 10th anniversary of September 11, 2001.

A decade later, much has changed, and yet nothing is different. The Patriots remain one of the league's elite teams, having won two more Super Bowl titles. And the memories of 9/11 are as stark as ever.

That was proven at Gillette Stadium, when New England once again honored the figures who symbolize the horror and healing of September 11, 2001. The cheers for Joe Andruzzi, his three firemen brothers, and policeman father were just as loud.

Vince Casey worked in public relations for the NFL for 16 seasons and is now a freelance writer.

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power to the players

Always a standout on the big stage, NFL all-time rushing leader Emmitt Smith topped 100 yards on the ground in two of the Cowboys' three Super Bowl wins in the 1990s. He was the MVP of Super Bowl XXVIII.

NFL Photos/AP Images

GROUND TROOPS

WHILE THE PASSING GAME IS ALL THE RAGE THESE DAYS, HISTORY REMINDS US THAT RUNNING BACKS HAVE LONG BEEN THE BEST SUPER BOWL OPTION.

by Lisa Altobelli

There's something poetic about watching a player running to daylight. Everything seems to align in such a way where—for a few seconds—the field opens up and there's a path as clear as a runway.

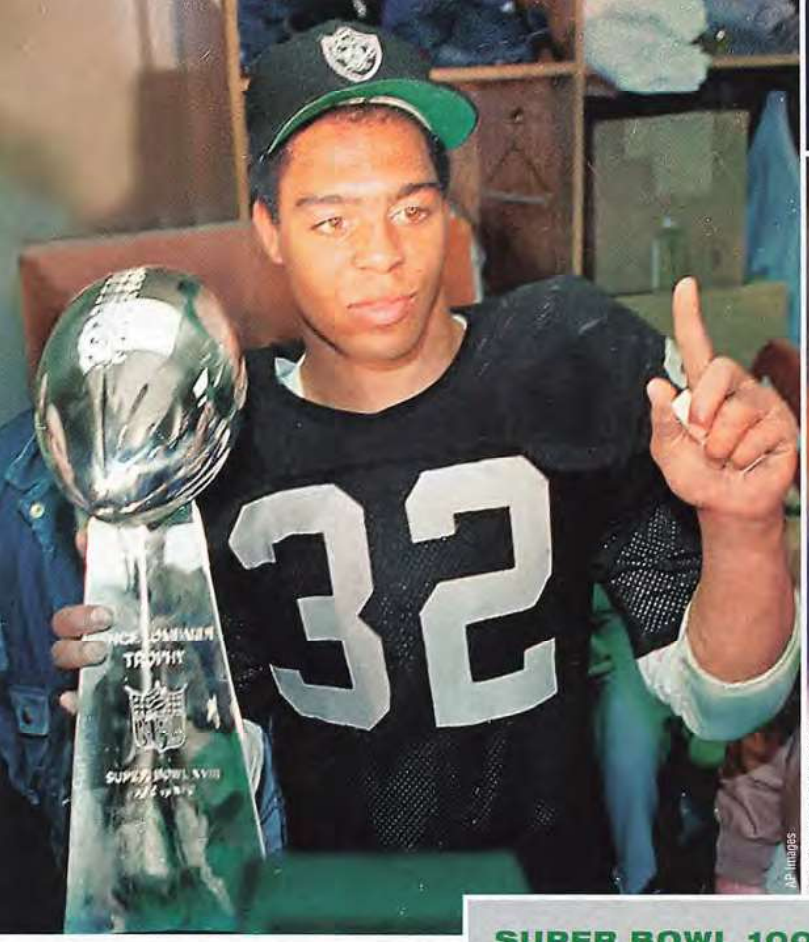
Most NFL backs have had their share of "run to daylight" moments, but only a precious few have hit such paydirt in a Super Bowl setting. When they do, it usually adds up to victory. Of the 18 times when a back has reached 100 rushing yards, on all but two occasions their team has returned home with the Vince Lombardi Trophy. To further prove the point, the pair that lost did so to a team that had a 100-yard rusher of its own.

That's pretty compelling stuff.

But times are changing: Only nine teams have won a Super Bowl while rushing for less than 100 yards, but four of those have come in the last four years, which confirms a paradigm shift in basic football philosophy. Take a look at the average number of rushing yards for Super Bowl-winning teams in each decade: 1960s: 145.0; 1970s: 170.7; 1980s: 174.0; 1990s: 131.8; 2000s: 118.2; and 2010s: 50.5.

"The game has definitely changed to be a quarterback-driven passing league," says former player and head coach Herman Edwards. "The only times the running game becomes important now are when you're in the red zone, when you need to take time off the clock, and maybe on occasion for a first down. Plus, with the astronomical sums of money spent on a quarterback these days, you're not going to ask the guy to turn around and hand it off 35 times."

Even Bill Cowher concedes that anything you gain on the ground these days is purely supplemental. "Right now, and I hate to say this, but the running game is a complement," says the man who coached the Steelers when they rushed for 181 yards in their Super Bowl XL win over Seattle. "It's not the foundation that it once was."



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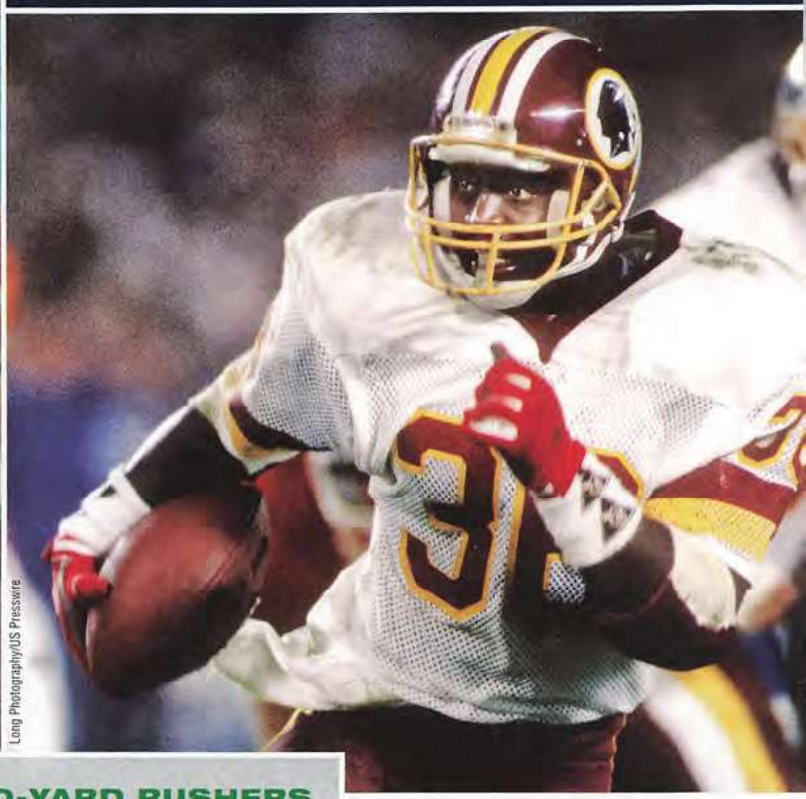

Long Photography/US Presswire

(Left) **At the time, Marcus Allen's 191 rushing yards in the Raiders' Super Bowl XVIII victory was a record and earned him the game's MVP award.** (Below) **Redskins rookie Timmy Smith broke the mark with 204 yards in Super Bowl XXII. Teams with a back who rushes for at least 100 yards are 16-2 in the Super Bowl.**

SUPER BOWL 100-YARD RUSHERS

Player (Team, Super Bowl)	Att.	Yds.	TD	Lg	Result
Timmy Smith (Redskins, XXII)	22	204	2	58	W, 42-10
Marcus Allen (Raiders, XVIII)	20	191	2	74	W, 38-9
John Riggins (Redskins, XVII)	38	166	1	43	W, 27-17
Franco Harris (Steelers, IX)	34	158	1	25	W, 16-6
Terrell Davis (Broncos, XXXII)	30	157	3	27	W, 31-24
Larry Csonka (Dolphins, VIII)	33	145	2	16	W, 24-7
Clarence Davis (Raiders, XI)	16	137	0	35	W, 32-14
Thurman Thomas (Bills, XXV)	15	135	1	31	L, 19-20
Emmitt Smith (Cowboys, XXVIII)	30	132	2	15	W, 30-13
Michael Pittman (Buccaneers, XXXVII)	29	124	0	24	W, 48-21
Matt Snell (Jets, III)	30	121	1	12	W, 16-7
Dominic Rhodes (Colts, XLI)	21	113	1	36	W, 29-17
Larry Csonka (Dolphins, VII)	15	112	0	49	W, 14-7
Thomas Jones (Bears, XLI)	15	112	0	52	L, 17-29
Emmitt Smith (Cowboys, XXVII)	22	108	1	38	W, 52-17
Ottis Anderson (Giants, XXV)	21	102	1	24	W, 20-19
Terrell Davis (Broncos, XXXIII)	25	102	0	15	W, 34-19
Jamal Lewis (Ravens, XXXV)	27	102	1	19	W, 34-7

One of the early indicators of this change was the move from the lone stud workhorse to more of a mishmash running back by committee.

"The guy who plays on first down isn't going to be the same guy on third down these days," says Edwards. "Most teams still have one big back who can pound the ball when you need it, but they also have an arsenal of specialty backs who come in on other downs to catch a pass or run a draw."

If you look at history, however, the importance of a dominant running back in the Super Bowl can't be overstated. It first showed itself in Super Bowl III. Even though Joe Namath was the game's MVP, it was Matt Snell who did much of the work that allowed the quarterback to make good on his "guarantee" by rushing for 121 yards and scoring the Jets' lone touchdown in their 16-7 upset of the Colts.

Three running backs have topped 100 rushing yards twice in a Super Bowl—ironically each in back-to-back title games: the Dolphins' Larry Csonka in VII and VIII; the Cowboys' Emmitt Smith in XXVII and XXVIII; and the Broncos' Terrell Davis in XXXII and XXXIII.

Davis promptly made his mark in the league with three straight 1,000-yard rushing seasons before breaking the 2K barrier in his fourth. But in Super Bowl XXXII, he was faced with an interesting challenge when it came to finding daylight. He couldn't see.

After scoring an early touchdown, Davis was unintentionally kicked in the head by Packers defensive tackle Santana Dotson and suffered blurred vision. He was forced to the locker room for the entire second quarter, receiving treatment and then waiting for medication to kick in. It eventually did and so did Davis, scoring two more times and finishing with 157 rushing yards in Denver's 31-24 win. When asked about it later, Davis, the game's MVP, said, "It's like it didn't even happen."

The Raiders' Marcus Allen had a different type of vision in his Super Bowl XVIII performance against the Redskins. Instead of blurred, it was bionic. He turned in a 191-yard effort, replete with two scores and what was then a Super Bowl record-breaking 74-yard jaunt into the paint.

"That's the one time I remember being in a zone—if you can remember such a thing," said Allen to NFL Films when later asked about his moves. "Everything was going absolutely right with the visualization of holes. Things were moving in slow motion and I felt at top speed at all times."

Despite Allen's massive gains in that game, a great trivia stumper is the name of the only back who ran away with more yards than marvelous Marcus in a Super Bowl. Want a hint? His last name is Smith.

While most anyone would guess NFL all-time rushing leader

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Manny Rubio/US Presswire

Malcolm Emmons/US Presswire

(Top left) **John Riggins (44) celebrates with teammates Virgil Seay (80) and lineman Garry Puetz after his 43-yard touchdown run put the Redskins ahead to stay in Super Bowl XVII.** (Bottom left) **Nearly three decades after his retirement, Franco Harris remains the Super Bowl's all-time rushing leader with 354 yards.**

Emmitt Smith, the record actually goes to the Redskins' Timmy Smith, who was in and out of the league in three short seasons. Just to ratchet up the implausibility factor, Smith's record 204 yards in Super Bowl XXII against the Broncos was the then-rookie's first start—something he didn't find out about until the team was gathered in the tunnel ready to take the field.

"They even introduced our veteran back George Rogers during the pregame ceremony, so when I started, it was a big shock to everybody—even to me," recalls Smith. "Running backs coach Don Breaux didn't want to tell me earlier because he thought I would be too nervous and mess up if I had time to think about it."

Mess up? He certainly didn't, but he also had a ferocious front line called "The Hogs" blocking for him, and a little play beloved by head coach Joe Gibbs called the Counter Trey.

"Timmy Smith's first touchdown could serve as a training film on the Counter Trey," says *Sports Illustrated* senior writer and historical football play and formation expert Tim Layden. "Smith jab-steps left at the snap, and Broncos nose tackle Greg Kragen and rookie linebacker Marc Munford both read that step and begin moving to their right.

"But then Smith cuts hard to his right as left tackle Joe Jacoby and left guard Raleigh McKenzie pull from the backside and lead him through the hole. The play works so perfectly that Smith isn't touched while breaking into the secondary. And it worked repeatedly all game."

It may have also helped that Washington deflated the Broncos with a 35-point second-quarter blitz—four of those touchdowns coming on Doug Williams passes and the other on a 58-yard Smith run.

"They would hold three guys off to the left and I would just have one guy to beat," says Smith. "Our guys had been playing eight, nine years up front together and blocked for John Riggins. They were some of the best linemen around."

It's Riggins who gets the bronze in the yardage race, behind only Smith and Allen for his Super Bowl XVII 166 yards on 38 carries (still a Super Bowl record), which seems fantastically improbable today.

"When I was with Tampa Bay, there was one game where coach John McKay gave Ricky Bell the ball to run 39 times," recalls Williams, who began his NFL quarterbacking career with the Buccaneers before going to Washington. "When I asked coach why he would do that, he said, 'Well, the ball isn't heavy, so why not?'"

Then there's the ultimate bulldozer of the backfield: the Steelers' Franco Harris, who amassed 354 yards and four touchdowns in four Super Bowl wins.

Harris' first Super Bowl was against the Vikings and their vaunted "Purple People Eaters" defense, yet it all seemed to set up perfectly for the bearded back. The game was moved from indoors at the Louisiana Superdome to outdoors at Tulane Stadium as a result of stadium construction delays. The New Orleans weather was a blustery 46 degrees with a slick surface from an earlier downpour that had to be suctioned off with a vacuum. In other words, the perfect scenario for some run-it-up-the-gut type football, and Harris didn't disappoint.

When the Steelers' 16-6 win was complete, Harris had broken two Super Bowl records with 158 rushing yards on 34 carries. He just didn't have any idea he was doing it at the time.

"It was a close game, so I wasn't thinking about the last play or the next one. I was just trying to focus on pounding the ball whenever I had it, so I actually had no sense of how many yards I had," recalls Harris, who scored the game's first touchdown on a 9-yard run. "As a matter of fact, I was shocked when they told me."

Efforts like that provide nostalgia for Harris.

"The game was just different back then," he says. "Everyone had a commitment to run and pound it out. That was what football was about."

Harris cites many rule changes that have prompted today's aerial assault, including those now in place to protect the quarterback and the big one limiting contact with a receiver to within five yards of the line of scrimmage. Still, he'll always have the Super Bowl IX MVP Award (when his rushing total was complemented by another 65 yards from teammate Rocky Bleier).

"I guess it makes me feel good because it's a nice reminder that we used to have a running game," says Harris.

So is that "we" as in the Steelers or "we" as in the NFL as a whole?

"Both," says Harris.

Lisa Altobelli is currently an ESPN.com editor. She previously was an NFL.com editor and also covered the NFL for six years at Sports Illustrated.

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Overdue *for* Overtime

NFL PLAYOFF HISTORY IS FILLED WITH OVERTIME THRILLERS. HOW SOON BEFORE A SUPER BOWL JOINS THAT LIST?

by Charean Williams

When Garrett Hartley's 40-yard overtime field goal cleared the crossbar, giving the Saints their first NFC championship and sending them on to Super Bowl XLIV, people in New Orleans partied like never before. Car horns blared, fans screamed, and Hurricane toasts went on all night at Pat O'Briens in celebration of the 31-28 victory over the stunned Vikings.

Dick Raphael/US Presswire

David E. Hingle/US Presswire

(Opposite page) **Denver's Rich Karlis kicks the overtime field goal that beat Cleveland in the 1986 AFC playoffs.** (Top left) **Jim Kiick runs the ball during Miami's 1971 playoff win over Kansas City, the longest NFL game ever played.** (Top right) **Garrett Hartley and teammates celebrate the Saints' NFC title game victory over Minnesota two years ago.**

"I think for all of us—our team, the organization, and the city—it was the idea of, 'Hey, if he makes this kick, we're going to the Super Bowl, which is a game that this organization has never been to,'" recalls Saints coach Sean Payton. "That was an important hurdle."

Entering this season's playoffs, the NFL had played 422 postseason games in the Super Bowl era. Twenty-four had gone into overtime. None of those, however, were Super Bowls.

Not surprisingly, these are some of the most talked-about games in league history, and many have earned a nickname that elicits an immediate memory:

• The era's first postseason overtime game remains the NFL's longest. The Chiefs and Dolphins played "The Marathon Game" in the AFC divisional round on Christmas Day 1971. The Dolphins prevailed, 27-24, on a 37-yard Garo Yepremian field goal that came after 82 minutes and 40 seconds of action.

• "The Epic in Miami," a divisional game in 1981, went 13:52 into overtime before Rolf Benirschke ended it with a 29-yard field goal giving the Chargers—who at one point led by 24 points—a 41-38 victory over the Dolphins.

• The 1986 AFC Championship Game is best remembered for "The Drive." John Elway led the Broncos 98 yards for a touchdown to tie the Browns, 20-20, with 37 seconds left in regulation before Rich Karlis kicked a 33-yard field goal 5:38 into overtime.

• The 1992 Wild Card game between the Houston Oilers and the Buffalo Bills is known as "The Comeback." The host Bills rallied from a 32-point deficit to force overtime, where Steve Christie kicked a 32-yard field goal on their first possession. It remains the biggest comeback in NFL playoff history.

• Gary Anderson, who had been perfect the entire 1998 season, missed a 38-yard field goal with 2:07 remaining that would have sealed the Vikings' victory in the NFC Championship Game. Instead, because of "The Miss," it opened the door for the Falcons to drive for the tying touchdown with 49 seconds left. Then, with 3:22 remaining in the first overtime, Morten Andersen kicked a 38-yard field goal that gave Atlanta a 30-27 victory.

• The Patriots won what's alternately known as the "Snow Bowl" or the "Tuck Rule Game" in the 2001 divisional round. Playing at home in a driving snowstorm, kicker Adam Vinatieri hit a 45-yard field goal to tie the Raiders, 13-13, with 27 seconds left in the fourth quarter. He then won it on the first possession of overtime with a 23-yard field goal. New England went on to capture Super Bowl XXXVI.

Hall of Fame coach John Madden remembers another, the one overtime playoff game he coached in that became known as "Ghost to the Post." The game was named after Ken Stabler's 42-yard pass to Dave Casper (whose nickname was "The Ghost") that set up the game-tying field goal in regulation. The Raiders and Colts then went into double overtime, when Oakland reached Baltimore's 10-yard line. Madden called a timeout and was "stumbling" for a play call when Stabler interrupted his thoughts.

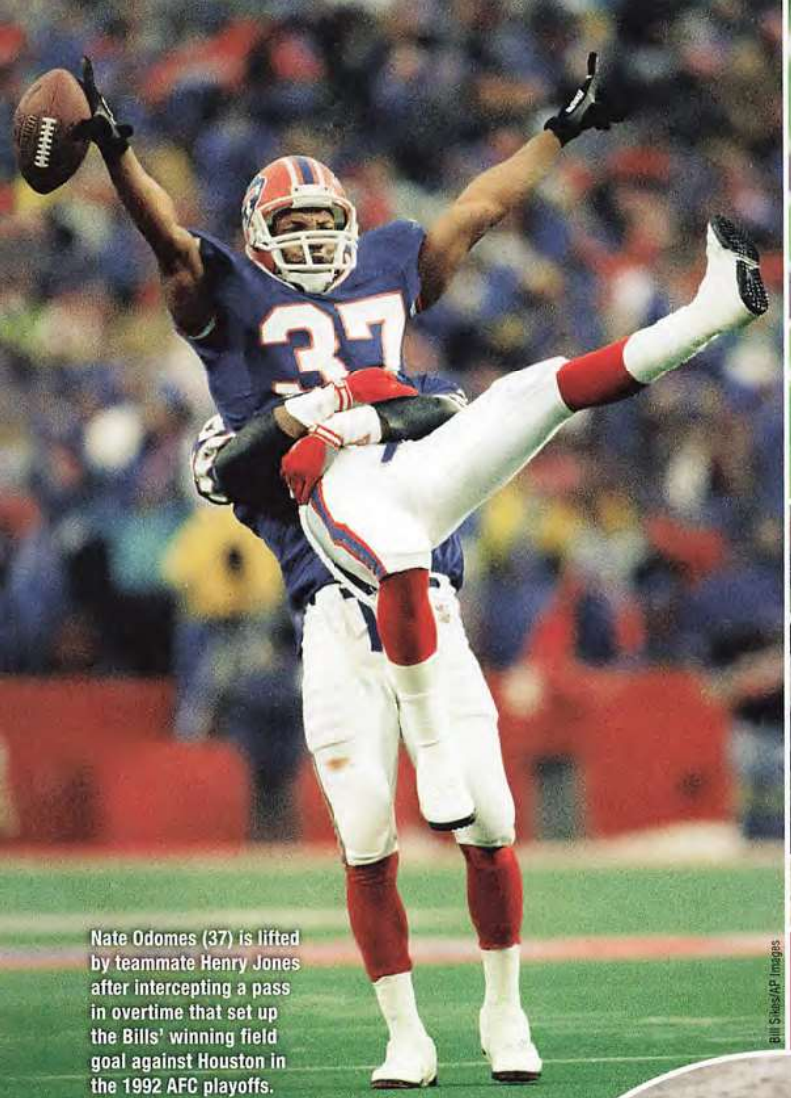
"I'm thinking, 'Great, he has a play,'" Madden remembers.

Instead, Stabler told his coach, "You know what, John? These fans are getting their money's worth today." Raiders fans then got a victory on the next play when Stabler found Casper for a touchdown.

"In the playoffs, you're assured of two teams that are close to being evenly matched, playing in a big game on a big stage," says Madden. "That's why the close ones are more the norm."

Dan Reeves coached in two OT conference championship games. He was on the winning sideline for both "The Drive" and "The Miss," and though neither his Broncos nor Falcons won the Super Bowl those seasons, the victories rank at the top of his list of memorable games.

Al Behrman/AP Images



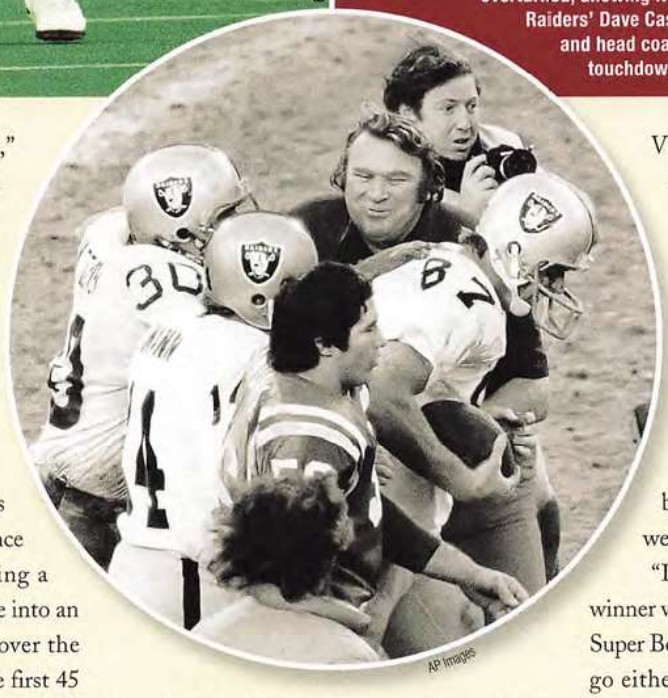
Nate Odomes (37) is lifted by teammate Henry Jones after intercepting a pass in overtime that set up the Bills' winning field goal against Houston in the 1992 AFC playoffs.

Bill Sikes/AP Images

Morry Gash/AP Images

Elise Amendola/AP Images

(Top) Atlanta's Terance Mathis makes the game-tying TD grab against Minnesota in the 1998 NFC title game. (Middle) Patriots QB Tom Brady loses the ball late in his team's 2001 playoff win over Oakland, a play that was challenged and overturned, allowing New England to keep possession. (Below) The Raiders' Dave Casper (87) is congratulated by teammates and head coach John Madden after scoring the winning touchdown vs. the Colts in a 1977 playoff contest.



AP Images

"What's on the line is incredible," says Reeves, "and both of those games were on the road. That made it that much more exciting, because you're fighting all kinds of odds with the crowd noise and everything.

"They were extremely exciting —the most exciting—considering everything."

Yet, for all the exciting postseason overtime games, the Super Bowl has never seen the 61st minute. In fact, since 1932, when the NFL started playing a championship game, just one has gone into an extra session: the Colts' 23-17 win over the Giants in 1958. And only eight of the first 45 Super Bowls have had a realistic opportunity to be extended in the end.

"It's funny that it's never happened," says former Rams running back Marshall Faulk. "Being a fan of the game, you'd love to see it. It's probably only a matter of time."

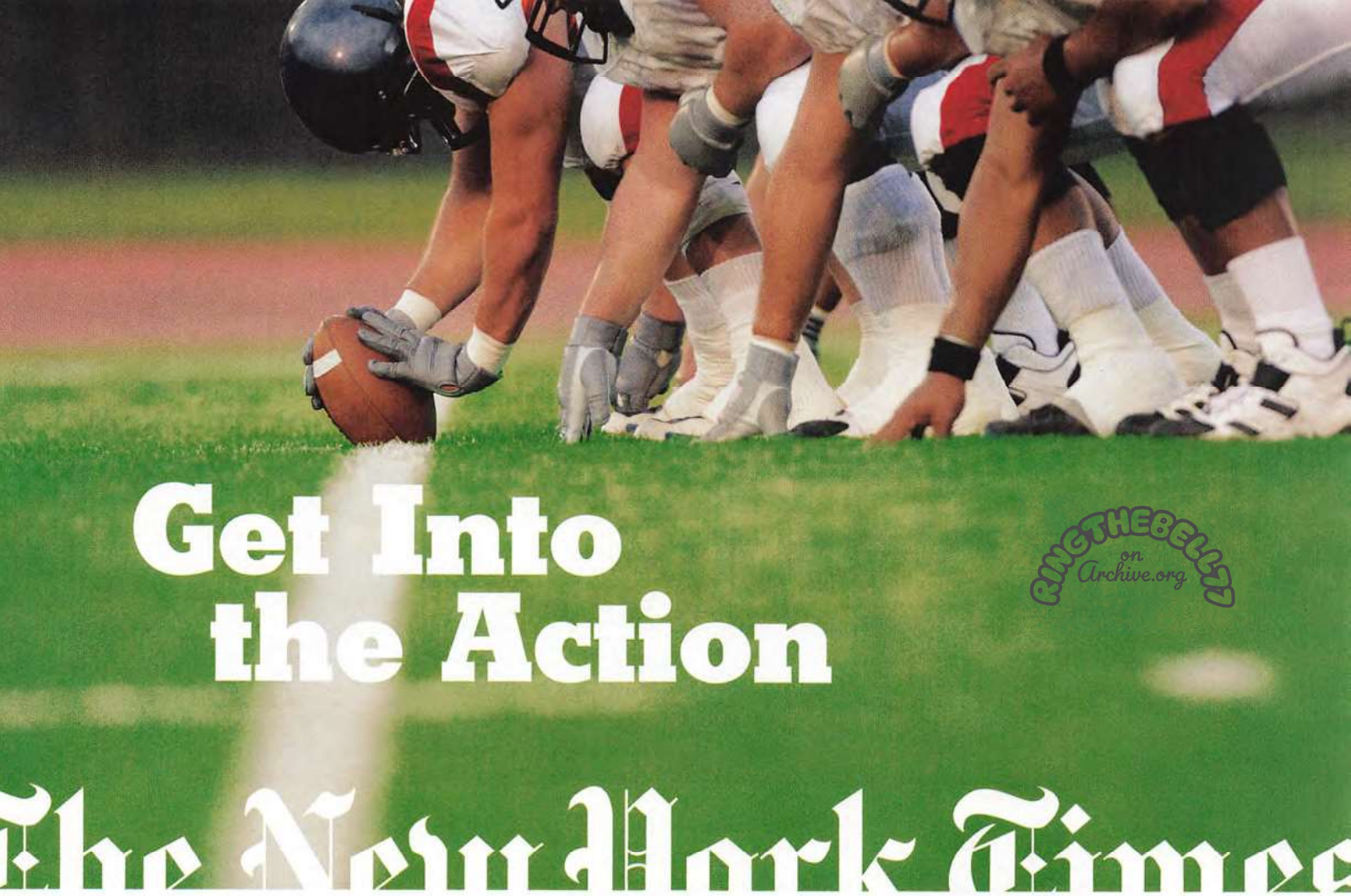
No one has been closer to an overtime Super Bowl than Faulk's former teammate, Kurt Warner. Playing in three Super Bowls decided in the final minute, Warner's teams won one and lost two.

His Rams beat the Titans, 23-16, in Super Bowl XXXIV when linebacker Mike Jones tackled Tennessee receiver Kevin Dyson a yard short of the goal line as time expired. But Warner lost the same way two years later when Vinatieri kicked a 48-yard field goal on the final play of regulation for a 20-17 Patriots victory. Warner's Cardinals then lost Super Bowl XLIII when receiver Santonio Holmes caught a 6-yard TD pass with 35 seconds remaining, giving the Steelers a 27-23 win and spoiling Arizona's stunning fourth-quarter comeback.

Warner's Super Bowl victory was by seven points. His two losses? They were by a combined seven points.

"I could be a three-time Super Bowl winner very, very easily; I could be a three-time Super Bowl loser very easily," he notes. "It could go either way. As I got older, I just came to appreciate the games more than the wins. I'm glad I got a chance to be part of three of the greatest Super Bowls ever played, three Super Bowls that people remember, because the two best teams played the best game of the year, and it came down to the end.

"In all three of those games, everybody was sitting on the edge of their seats, and either



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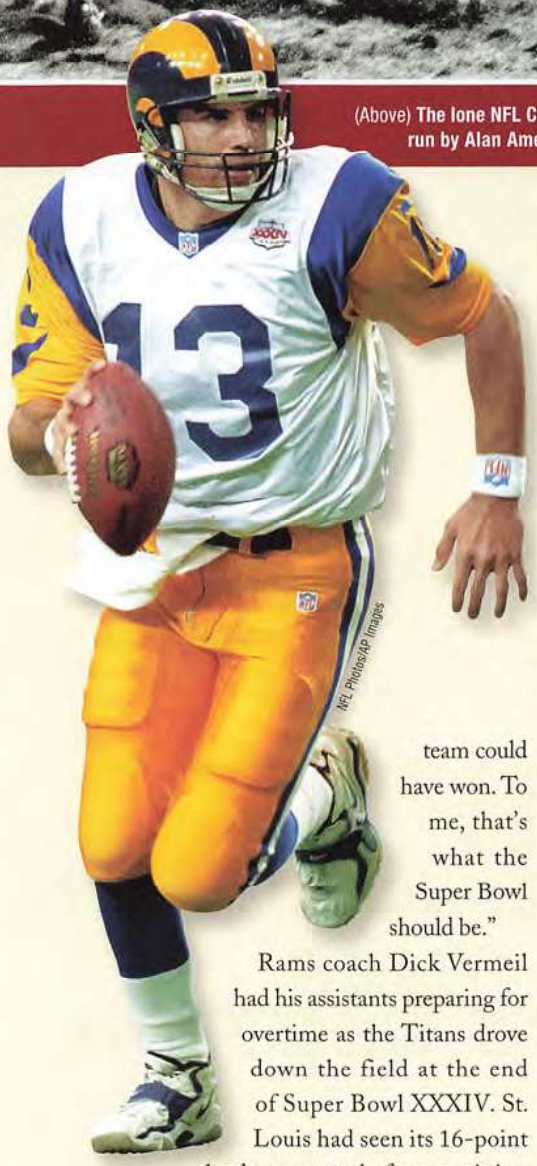
(Above) **The lone NFL Championship Game to go into overtime took place in 1958 when the Colts beat the Giants, 23-17, on this touchdown run by Alan Ameche.** (Left) **Kurt Warner was involved in three Super Bowl games that could have easily reached the "61st minute."**



NFL Photos/AP Images

team could have won. To me, that's what the Super Bowl should be."

Rams coach Dick Vermeil had his assistants preparing for overtime as the Titans drove down the field at the end of Super Bowl XXXIV. St. Louis had seen its 16-point lead evaporate before regaining the upper hand on a 73-yard touchdown pass from Warner to Isaac Bruce with 1:54 left, but the Titans reached the 10-yard line with six seconds to play, and it took Jones' tackle for the Rams to avoid overtime.

"I remember talking to [offensive coordinator] Mike Martz, and telling him to start thinking overtime, get prepared for overtime, because it may very well go there," Vermeil says. "I didn't want it to surprise us if it happened on the last play of the game.

"Fortunately, it didn't. But believe me, Mike was sitting in the press box on that last drive, getting himself ready for an offensive series if the defense didn't get [Tennessee] stopped. It was a very intense time."

Today's postseason overtime rules are different. In 2010, NFL owners voted to allow a team to win on the opening possession of overtime only by scoring a touchdown.

A field goal on the drive would necessitate a kickoff, giving the opposition a chance to tie the game with a field goal or to win it with a touchdown. If each team had one possession and the score remained tied, the game would revert to sudden death.

The genesis of the rule is "fairness," though the first OT game since its implementation—this year's Wild Card contest between the Broncos and Steelers—wasn't necessarily a good test case since Denver scored a touchdown on its first play from scrimmage.

"You bust your rear end to get to the playoffs," explains former Titans head coach Jeff Fisher, who was co-chairman of the league's competition committee when the rule changed. "You get to the playoffs, and then you end up in overtime, and you don't get an opportunity to possess the football.

"That's not something we want to see happen with so much on the line."

Minnesota never touched the ball in its 2009 overtime playoff loss to the Saints. Had the rule been in place, Payton said he would have been more aggressive on offense after the Saints received the overtime kickoff.

"It would have put me in a more normal red-zone mode as opposed to, 'Let's just get close, kick it, and get out of here,'" he says.

The Saints did take one shot down the field and went for it on a fourth-and-1 (which they converted on a penalty), but once they were in field goal range, they left it up to Hartley.

He made the kick, and an impromptu Mardi Gras broke out in New Orleans.

We're still waiting for the time a Super Bowl champion celebrates the same way.

Charean Williams has covered the NFL for 18 seasons, including the past 12 for the Fort Worth Star-Telegram. *The Texas A&M graduate is a Pro Football Hall of Fame selector and immediate past president of the Pro Football Writers of America.*

TIMOTHY OLYPHANT

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GOLD RUSH

by Ira Miller

Dwight Clark catches the touchdown pass in the 1981 NFC Championship Game that changed the 49ers' fortunes.

Bruce Bennett Studios/Getty Images

In San Francisco, it is taken as an act of faith that professional football was born on a January day in 1982 when Dwight Clark leaped high into the air, caught a pass thrown by Joe Montana, and, in that instant, transformed the 49ers from long-time losers to perhaps the NFL's greatest dynasty.

The many years of pro football that came before? Forget them. For the Bay Area, "The Catch" obscured all that preceded it.

Yet, while that singular moment 30 winters ago ended decades of frustration, what followed was more stunning: the team's long stay at or near the top of the league, fueled by the ability to adapt to change in an era when that was not the norm.

In the NFL of today, with free agency and a salary cap, it is gospel that long-term domination is impossible because teams undergo too much annual change; they can't keep their key elements together long enough to forge a dynasty. But the success of the 49ers throughout the 1980s and well into the '90s was possible in large part because they smartly realized that change could be their friend.

George Seifert, who succeeded the late Hall of Fame coach Bill Walsh—the man who created the 49ers' mystique—explained it best. No matter how good a season his team had just finished (and they were all good seasons back then), Seifert inevitably would recite the following spring that, "Every year is different," and that what came before was no harbinger of the future.

Walsh never said it quite like that, but his constant tinkering, year-in and year-out, showed that he believed it. And it all started in that first championship season when his 49ers defeated the Bengals in Super Bowl XVI.

Some of the highlights are familiar: the emergence of Montana (the ideal leader for Walsh's West Coast offense), the rapid development of a defense fueled by three rookie starters in the secondary (including Ronnie Lott), and the remarkable fortune of good health that permitted no more serious injury than the four-week loss of kicker Ray Wersching.

Walsh was also a master psychologist, knowing just when to take the heat off his young players and when to turn it up. He frequently forced the heat onto himself, such as the time when he railed against the "New York media elite" for not showing highlights of the 49ers' in-season upset over Dallas at halftime of a Monday night game.

Or when he chided the NFL for a practice schedule at Super Bowl XVI in Detroit that he said was far too early in the Eastern time zone for a West Coast team. Or when he defied league dictates very publicly by telling players they could miss the start of Pro Bowl preparations to attend the team's parade back home.

The absence of a salary cap surely helped the 49ers because their owner, Eddie DeBartolo, was generous with his wallet. But with it came the lack of a true free agent market, requiring Walsh's shrewd personnel maneuvering to jump-start and maintain the success.

While known for plucking such gems as Montana and Jerry Rice in the draft, Walsh also was adept at dealing with other teams. He traded for Steve Young, of course, but he frequently found both stars and spare parts in veterans that other teams had discarded.

Jack Reynolds, a linebacker on that first Super Bowl team, was thought finished by the Rams. Fred Dean, a defensive end who reached the Hall of Fame, was traded to the 49ers because of a contract dispute in San Diego. Later, but still before the dawn of free agency, the 49ers were able to acquire former Pro Bowl defenders Jim Burt and Matt Millen, signing them for depth but eventually plugging them into the lineup because of injuries to other players.

THIRTY YEARS AGO, THE 49ERS DID MORE THAN MINE THEIR FIRST SUPER BOWL CROWN. THEY CREATED THE NFL'S LONGEST-RUNNING DYNASTY.

Malcolm Emmons/US Presswire

Joe Montana (left) and Bill Walsh used skill and innovation to produce a winner in San Francisco.

Fast-forward from that first Super Bowl to the unofficial end of the dynasty, the 49ers' fifth title—Super Bowl XXIX over San Diego following the 1994 season—and it was clear that the most significant move in keeping it going so long was Walsh's trade for Young seven years earlier. Although Young chafed at sitting on the bench behind Montana, his presence enabled the 49ers to make a rare transition from Hall of Famer to Hall of Famer at the game's most important position.

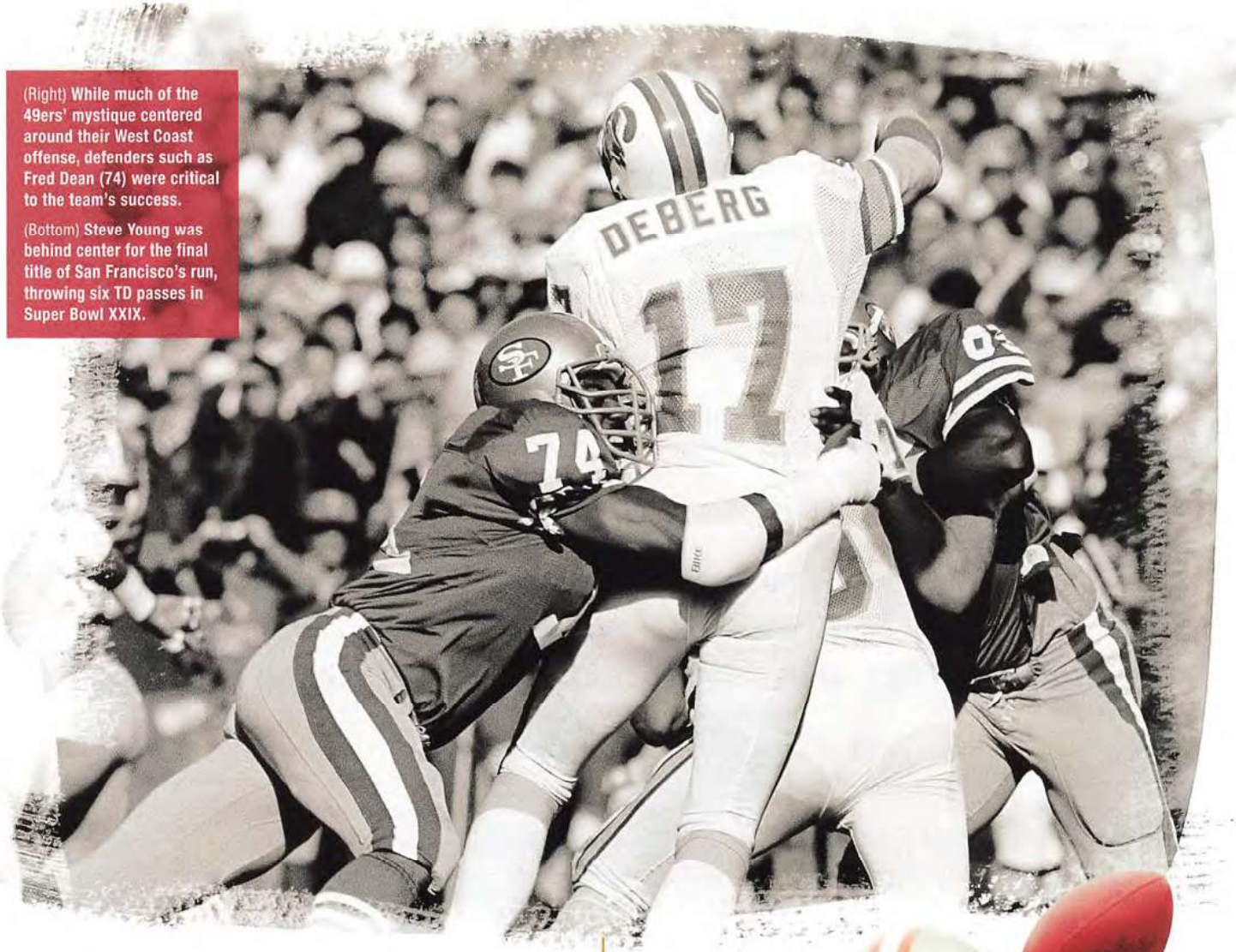
But the 49ers also adapted when the rules changed and free agency began in the '90s, signing many of their own players to long-term contract extensions before the salary cap took hold. Then they restocked the defense for their final Super Bowl run by signing five free agents, including two—Deion Sanders and Rickey Jackson—who are now in the Hall of Fame. Starters Tim McDonald, Ken Norton, and Gary Plummer arrived in that same free agency haul.

During the 14-year period from their first Super Bowl title to their fifth, the 49ers won at least 10 games in every full season and played in nine NFC Championship Games. Over that stretch, they had seven different rushing leaders, nine different interception leaders, and seven different leaders in sacks. The closest thing to a fixture, and he didn't arrive until the 49ers already had won two Super Bowls, was wide receiver Rice, who ultimately led the team in receiving 11 times.

The secondary was completely rebuilt twice during the '80s, first in 1981 when Walsh drafted four defensive backs in the first five rounds. In both '81 and '86, the 49ers succeeded with two rookie corners, something almost unheard of even then. It still boggles the

(Right) **While much of the 49ers' mystique centered around their West Coast offense, defenders such as Fred Dean (74) were critical to the team's success.**

(Bottom) **Steve Young was behind center for the final title of San Francisco's run, throwing six TD passes in Super Bowl XXIX.**



Eric Risberg/AP Images

mind that the 1981 team ranked second in the NFL in total defense.

That was just one aspect of defensive change through those years that took the 49ers from the 3-4 to the 4-3 and back again, before they ultimately settled on a hybrid version.

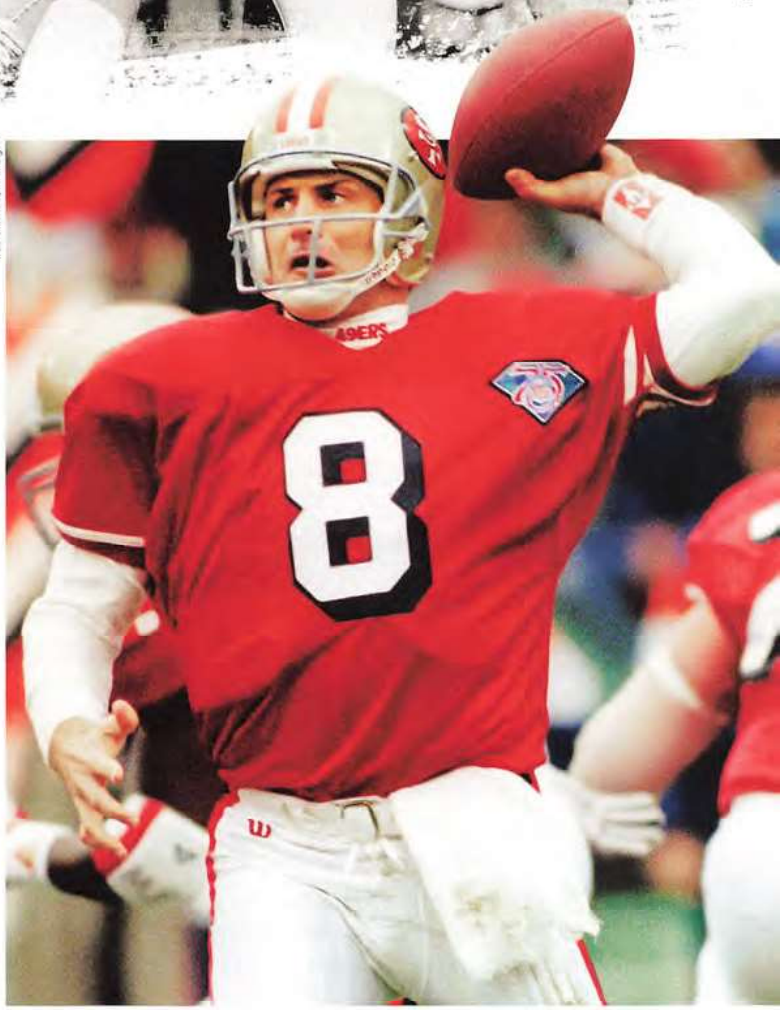
When Walsh accepted the reins in 1979, the 49ers had been a league-worst 15-47 over the previous four seasons and had gone through four coaches in three years. The turnaround began after Walsh plucked Montana in the third round of his first draft, when most NFL personnel experts thought the Notre Dame signal-caller too frail and weak-armed to succeed as a pro. Most importantly, players quickly saw that Walsh gave them hope as well as a challenge.

"As an offensive player, it took just a few practices, granted against a bad defense (ours), to see how good his concepts were," says lineman Randy Cross, now a CBS broadcaster.

"As a veteran who had survived four other head coaches with 'the answer,' skepticism was ingrained in all of us. Bill's first speech at training camp was both sobering and insightful. He mentioned our ability to survive different coaches despite losing and struggling to score or prevent scoring."

Quoting Walsh, Cross remembers:

"Some of you are sitting there thinking, 'Oh, great, another one of these geniuses with all the answers. I've survived the last few guys and I'll survive this guy.' But let me fill you in on two small facts. First, you play for easily the worst team in the NFL, and second, if you can't play for the worst team, who the hell do you think you CAN play for?"



Bob Galbraith/AP Images

Pull up
your pants.
Droopy pants. Your old man bugged you about it, your football coach never let you forget it. And you didn't care either way. But there are pants out there that merit a little attention. There are trousers that look fantastic and fit great, without sacrificing a thing to style. It's time you wore the best pants of your life. It's time for Game Day Chinos from Bonobos.
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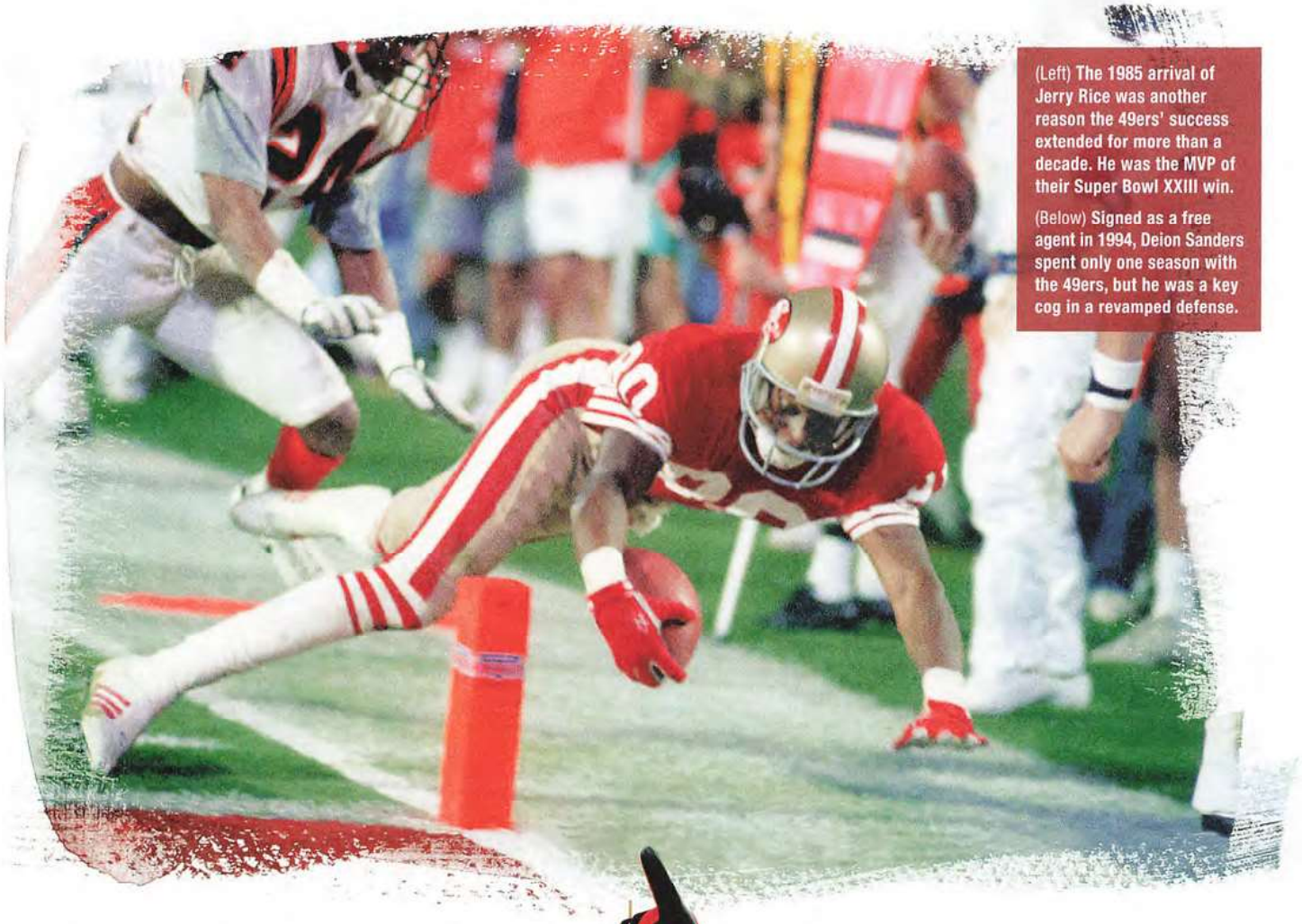


(Left) **The 1985 arrival of Jerry Rice was another reason the 49ers' success extended for more than a decade. He was the MVP of their Super Bowl XXIII win.**

(Below) **Signed as a free agent in 1994, Deion Sanders spent only one season with the 49ers, but he was a key cog in a revamped defense.**

US Presswire

"He then paused a good time for effect, which he no doubt could see from the looks on our faces," Cross adds.

Within three years, those quizzical looks turned to smiles.

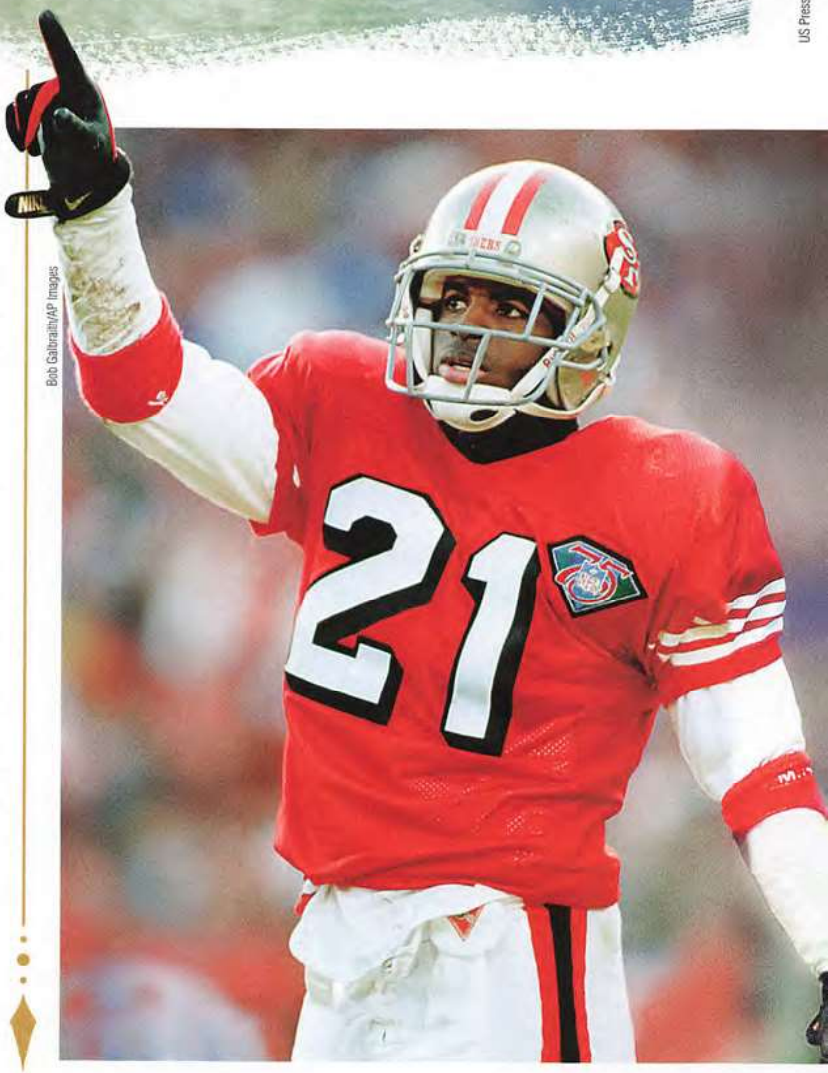
Walsh's influence survived long after he had left the organization. His successor, Seifert, came from within the staff, where he was defensive coordinator. When Seifert, who coached the 49ers' last two Super Bowl-winning teams, took over for the 1989 season, he hardly changed a thing, not even the practice schedule.

"I wasn't going to go in and say, 'Now, I'm really going to show you how to do it,' and yet, I was myself. I didn't try to be Bill," Seifert says. "I didn't try to change everything, either, so it became more 'mine.' I was part of the development of the system; I grew up in it and I believed in it."

And, of course, he had Young. Saddled at first with a sub-par defense, Young led the NFL in passer rating his first three seasons as the starter and earned the league's MVP award in 1992. But he had to endure unflattering comparisons with Montana until the defense, infused with free agent signings, was good enough to help win a title.

Young threw a record six touchdown passes in Super Bowl XXIX against the Chargers, but the memory that endures took place on the sidelines as he gleefully pranced among teammates, proclaiming, "The monkey's off my back. The monkey's off my back."

Call it the perfect end to a run we may never see again.



Bob Galbraith/AP Images

Ira Miller, a past president of the Pro Football Writers of America, was the 1993 winner of the Dick McCann Memorial Award for long and distinguished coverage of pro football.

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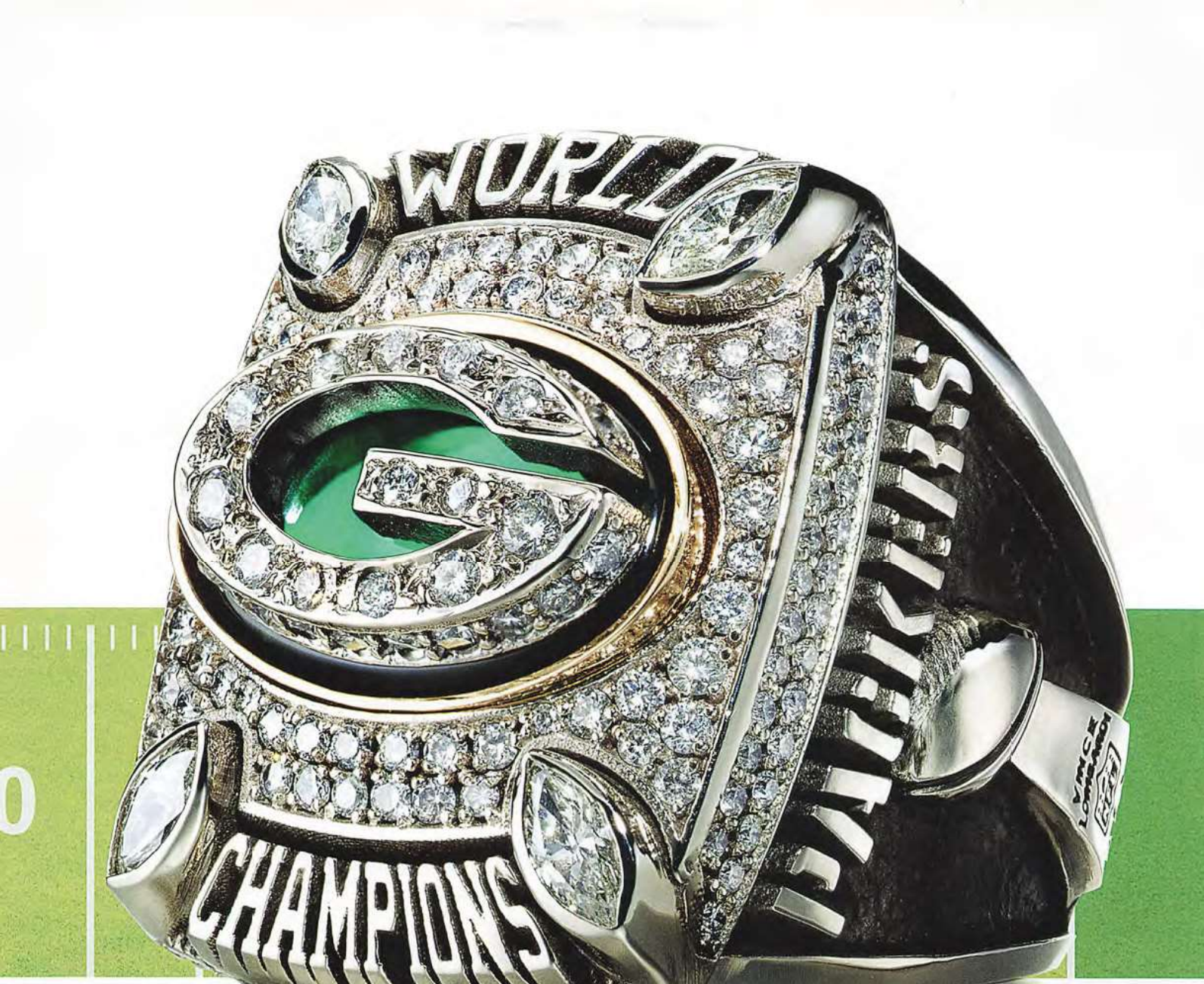

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SUPER BOWL I

Green Bay Packers 35
Kansas City Chiefs 10

January 15, 1967
Memorial Coliseum • Los Angeles, CA
Attendance: 61,946

MVP: Bart Starr (QB), Packers
16 of 23 passing, 250 yards, 2 TDs

The Big Moment: With the heavily favored Packers struggling to a 14-10 halftime lead, safety Willie Wood gave his team the play it needed to finally shake the Chiefs. On Kansas City's first possession of the third quarter, Wood intercepted a Len Dawson pass and returned it 50 yards, setting up Elijah Pitts' 5-yard TD run on the next play. Green Bay then pulled away, scoring on Max McGee's 13-yard catch and Pitts' 1-yard run. Earlier in the game, McGee caught a 37-yard TD from Bart Starr for the first points in Super Bowl history.

SUPER BOWL II

Green Bay Packers 33
Oakland Raiders 14

January 14, 1968
Orange Bowl • Miami, FL
Attendance: 75,546

MVP: Bart Starr (QB), Packers
13 of 24 passing, 202 yards, 1 TD

The Big Moment: Ahead 13-7 late in the second quarter, Green Bay punted from deep in its own territory, possibly giving Oakland one more scoring opportunity before halftime. As Donny Anderson's kick traveled over midfield, the Raiders' Rodger Bird signaled for a fair catch but fumbled the ball, which the Packers' Dick Capp recovered. Four plays later, Don Chandler's 43-yard field goal pushed the lead to nine. Green Bay tacked on 17 second-half points, capped by Herb Adderley's 60-yard interception return for a TD that made it 33-7.

SUPER BOWL III

New York Jets 16
Baltimore Colts 7

January 12, 1969
Orange Bowl • Miami, FL
Attendance: 75,389

MVP: Joe Namath (QB), Jets
17 of 28 passing, 206 yards

The Big Moment: After recovering a fumble deep in New York territory, the Colts looked poise to break a scoreless tie in the opening moments of the second quarter. But on a third-down play from the Jets' 6, QB Earl Morrall's pass to Tom Mitchell deflected off the receiver's shoulder and was intercepted in the end zone by Randy Beverly. New York then marched the length of the field, with Matt Snell running four yards for the game's first touchdown. Jim Turner took over in the second half, kicking three field goals to extend the lead to 16-0.

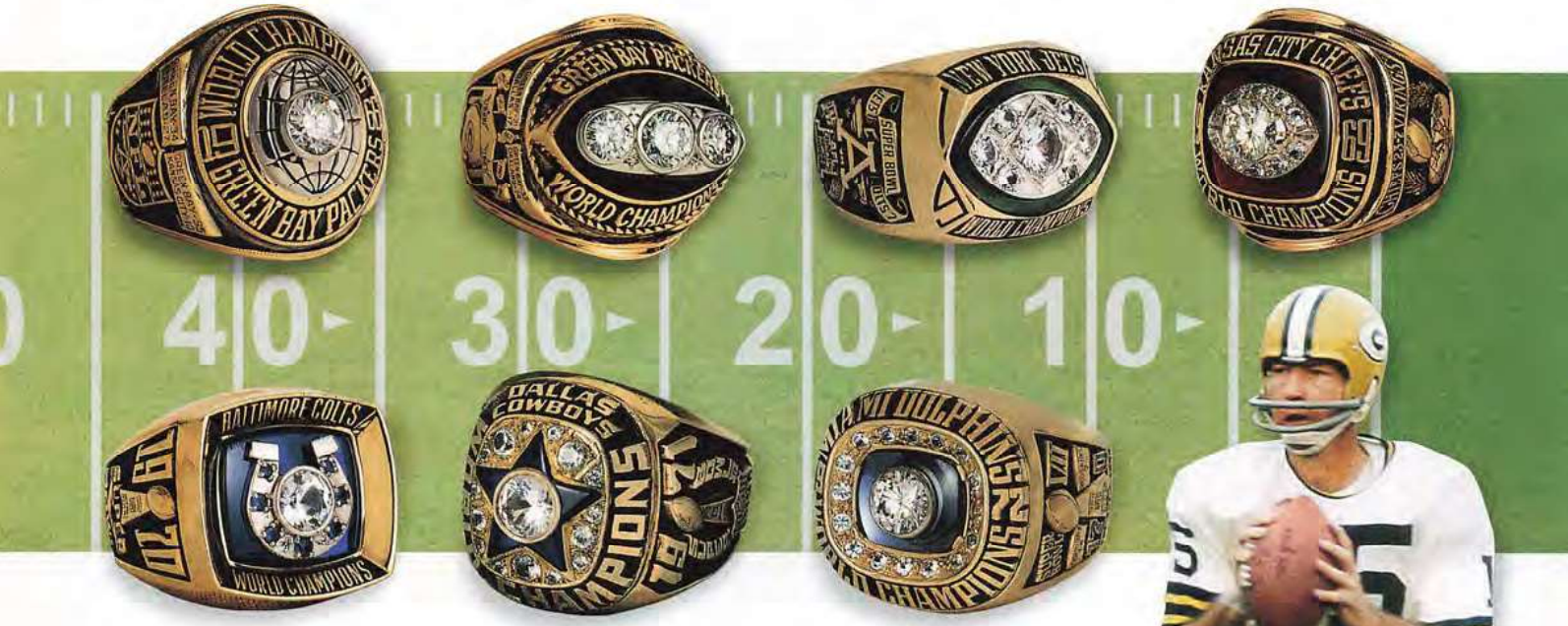
SUPER BOWL IV

Kansas City Chiefs 23
Minnesota Vikings 7

January 11, 1970
Tulane Stadium • New Orleans, LA
Attendance: 80,562

MVP: Len Dawson (QB), Chiefs
12 of 17 passing, 142 yards, 1 TD

The Big Moment: In danger of seeing momentum shift after the Vikings scored on Dave Osborn's 4-yard run that cut their lead to 16-7, the Chiefs instead responded the way champions do: with a touchdown of their own. On a first down play from the Minnesota, 46, QB Len Dawson completed a short pass to Otis Taylor, who avoided two tacklers before sprinting down the right sideline and into the end zone for the game's final points. Jan Stenerud had given Kansas City an early lead with field goals from 46, 32, and 25 yards.



SUPER BOWL V

Baltimore Colts 16
Dallas Cowboys 13

January 17, 1971
Orange Bowl • Miami, FL
Attendance: 79,204

MVP: Chuck Howley (LB), Cowboys
2 interceptions, 3 tackles

The Big Moment: In an affair that saw 11 turnovers, Baltimore turned two of those into the tying and winning points as they rallied past the Cowboys. Dallas was holding a 13-6 fourth-quarter lead when the Colts' Rick Volk intercepted a tipped pass and brought it back to the 3-yard line, setting up Tom Nowatzke's short TD run. Another interception off a tipped pass, this one by Mike Curtis, led to Jim O'Brien's 32-yard field goal with five seconds to play. Chuck Howley became the first (and remains the only) MVP chosen from a losing team.

SUPER BOWL VI

Dallas Cowboys 24
Miami Dolphins 3

January 16, 1972
Tulane Stadium • New Orleans, LA
Attendance: 81,023

MVP: Roger Staubach (QB), Cowboys
12 of 19 passing, 119 yards, 2 TDs

The Big Moment: The Cowboys received the second half kickoff and went 71 yards in eight plays for a TD that provided breathing room against the Dolphins. Duane Thomas keyed the drive, picking up 37 of those yards on the ground – 23 on one run to the right side and the final three on a sweep around left end for a score that put Dallas ahead, 17-3. The game's final points came on Roger Staubach's 7-yard TD pass to Mike Ditka, three plays after Chuck Howley intercepted a Bob Griese pass and returned it to the Miami 9.

SUPER BOWL VII

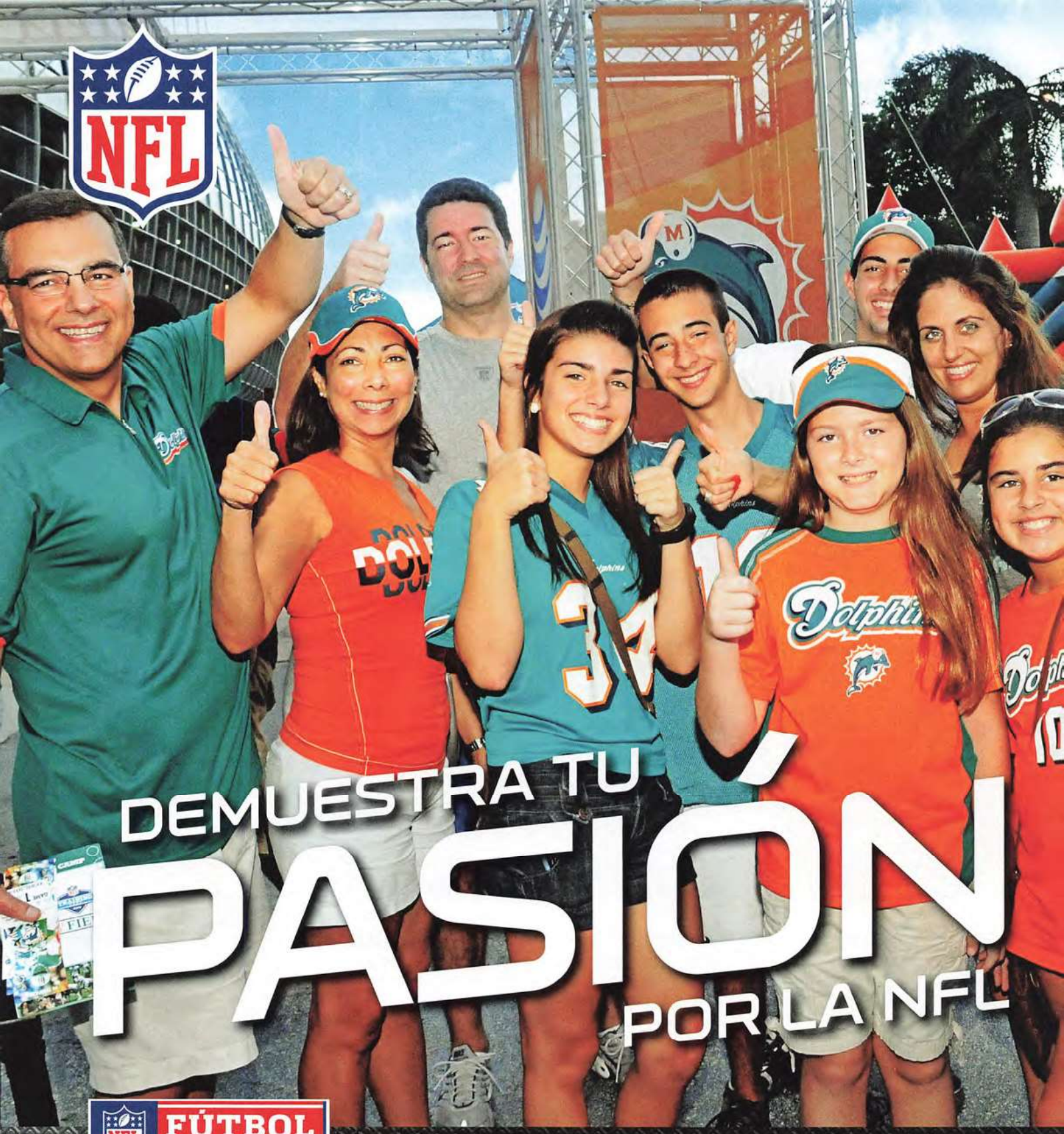
Miami Dolphins 14
Washington Redskins 7

January 14, 1973
Memorial Coliseum • Los Angeles, CA
Attendance: 90,182

MVP: Jake Scott (S), Dolphins
2 interceptions

The Big Moment: It was late in the second quarter, and Washington – trailing the undefeated Dolphins, 7-0 – had just crossed midfield for the first time all game. But on the first play after the two-minute warning, Redskins QB Billy Kilmer faced pressure as he looked to pass to Larry Brown. His throw instead ended up in the hands of Miami linebacker Nick Buoniconti, who returned it 32 yards. Five plays later, Jim Kiick scored on a 1-yard run. After two more quarters, the Dolphins completed what remains the only perfect season in NFL history.

Bart Starr



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SUPER BOWL VIII

Miami Dolphins 24
Minnesota Vikings 7

January 13, 1974
Rice Stadium • Houston, TX
Attendance: 71,882

MVP: Larry Csonka (RB), Dolphins
33 carries, 145 yards, 2 TDs

The Big Moment: Minnesota's first three possessions produced just one first down, and in the process Miami had stormed to a 17-0 lead. But the Vikings, looking to get back in the game before halftime, had moved from their own 20-yard line to the Dolphins' 6 when they faced a fourth-and-1. Fullback Oscar Reed took the handoff, but was immediately hit by linebacker Nick Buoniconti and fumbled, the loose ball recovered by Jake Scott to end the threat and send Miami on the way to its second straight championship.

SUPER BOWL IX

Pittsburgh Steelers 16
Minnesota Vikings 6

January 12, 1975
Tulane Stadium • New Orleans, LA
Attendance: 80,997

MVP: Franco Harris (RB), Steelers
34 carries, 158 yards, 1 TD

The Big Moment: Held scoreless until the fourth quarter, Minnesota appeared to get the break it needed when Matt Blair blocked a punt that Terry Brown recovered in the end zone for a TD that sliced the Steelers' lead to 9-6 (the extra point was missed). Pittsburgh, however, answered back, converting a pair of third downs during an 11-play, 66-yard march culminated with Terry Bradshaw's 4-yard scoring pass to Larry Brown. Mike Wagner then picked off Fran Tarkenton on the Vikings' next offensive play to put the game away.

SUPER BOWL X

Pittsburgh Steelers 21
Dallas Cowboys 17

January 18, 1976
Orange Bowl • Miami, FL
Attendance: 80,187

MVP: Lynn Swann (WR), Steelers
4 receptions, 161 yards, 1 TD

The Big Moment: A fourth-quarter rally propelled the Steelers past the Cowboys for their second straight Super Bowl win. Back-to-back drives deep into Dallas territory resulted in Roy Gerela field goals of 36 and 18 yards and a 15-10 lead, and Pittsburgh's defense then forced a three-and-out. On third-and-4 from his own 36, Steelers QB Terry Bradshaw lofted a long pass that Lynn Swann caught at the 5-yard line and took into the end zone for a TD. The Cowboys' final possession was ended by Glen Edwards' end zone interception.

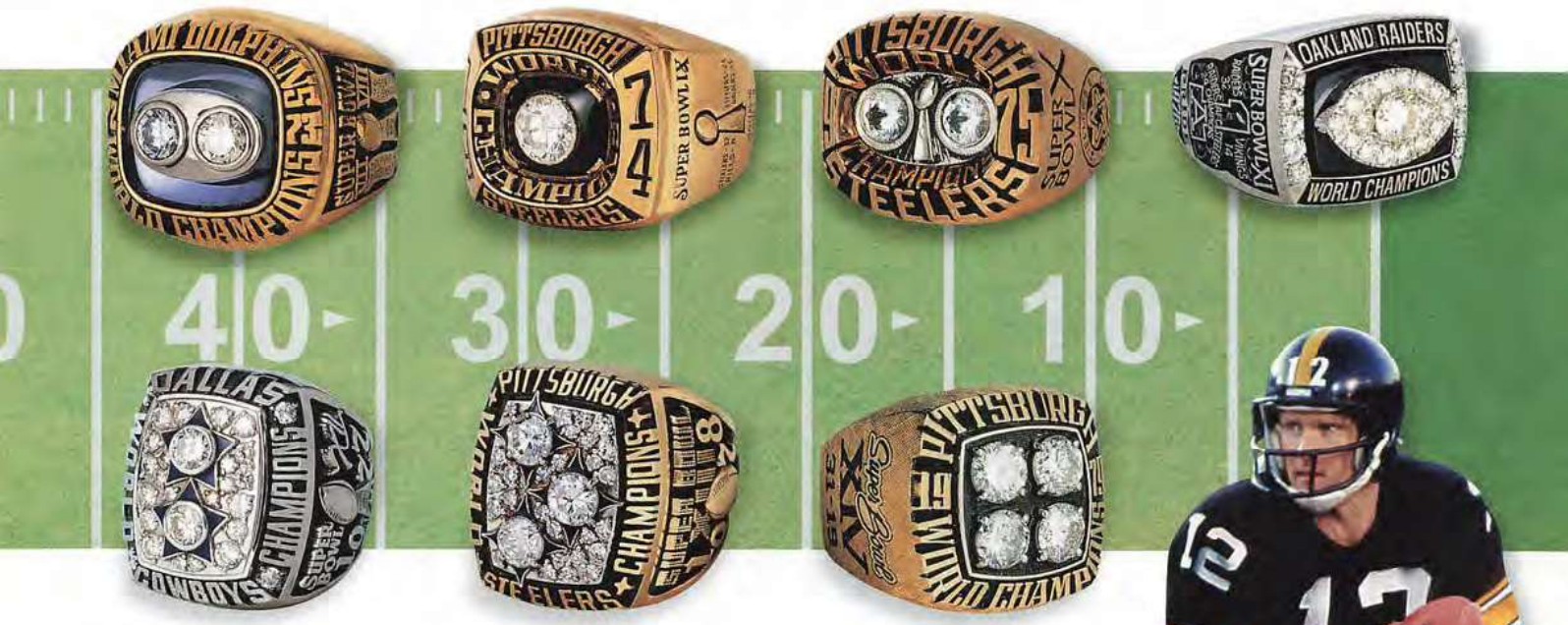
SUPER BOWL XI

Oakland Raiders 32
Minnesota Vikings 14

January 9, 1977
Rose Bowl • Pasadena, CA
Attendance: 103,438

MVP: Fred Biletnikoff (WR), Raiders
4 receptions, 79 yards

The Big Moment: Oakland's grip seemed to be slipping until its defense came up with a big fourth-quarter play. The Raiders had built a 19-0 lead, but Minnesota cut into it when Fran Tarkenton finished off a 12-play drive with an 8-yard TD pass to Sammy White. Minutes later, the Minnesota QB had his team on the move again, driving into Oakland territory before throwing a third-down interception to Willie Hall. Four plays later, the Raiders scored to go up 26-7, as Pete Banaszak reached paydirt on a 2-yard run.



SUPER BOWL XII

Dallas Cowboys 27
Denver Broncos 10

January 15, 1978
Superdome • New Orleans, LA
Attendance: 75,583

MVPs: Randy White (DT)
and Harvey Martin (DE), Cowboys
Members of a defense that had four sacks and allowed 156 total yards

The Big Moment: Dallas' defense forced eight turnovers, but none more important than the last one. With his team leading, 20-10, in the fourth quarter, defensive end Harvey Martin sacked Broncos QB Norris Weese, producing a fumble that Aaron Kyle recovered at the Denver 29. On the next play, Cowboys halfback Robert Newhouse threw a pass to Golden Richards in the left corner of the end zone for a TD that settled the outcome.

SUPER BOWL XIII

Pittsburgh Steelers 35
Dallas Cowboys 31

January 21, 1979
Orange Bowl • Miami, FL
Attendance: 79,484

MVP: Terry Bradshaw (QB), Steelers
17 of 30 passing, 318 yards, 4 TDs

The Big Moment: Momentum swung in the second quarter after a Dallas drive was thwarted and the Steelers moved ahead for good. With the score tied, 14-14, the Cowboys had a first down at the Pittsburgh 32 when Mel Blount picked off a Roger Staubach pass. Steelers QB Terry Bradshaw capitalized, directing a five-play drive that gained 50 yards on two completions to Lynn Swann and was capped by a 7-yard TD pass to Rocky Bleier with 26 seconds left in the half. Bleier later recovered an onside kick to clinch the win.

SUPER BOWL XIV

Pittsburgh Steelers 31
Los Angeles Rams 19

January 20, 1980
Rose Bowl • Pasadena, CA
Attendance: 103,985

MVP: Terry Bradshaw (QB), Steelers
14 of 21 passing, 309 yards, 2 TDs

The Big Moment: Favored to win their fourth Super Bowl in six seasons, the Steelers couldn't break away from the Rams until the final quarter. The game had six lead changes and Pittsburgh trailed, 19-17, when Terry Bradshaw hit John Stallworth down the middle for what turned into a 73-yard touchdown. Los Angeles tried to answer, using three first downs to reach the Steelers' 32 before a Jack Lambert interception stopped the drive. Franco Harris then added an insurance touchdown with a 1-yard run with 1:49 to play.

Malcolm Emmons/US Presswire

Terry Bradshaw

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SUPER BOWL XV

Oakland Raiders 27
Philadelphia Eagles 10

January 25, 1981
Superdome • New Orleans, LA
Attendance: 76,135

MVP: Jim Plunkett (QB), Raiders
13 of 21 passing, 261 yards, 3 TDs

The Big Moment: Trailing 7-0 in the first quarter, the Eagles appeared to have tied the game on a 40-yard TD pass from Ron Jaworski to Rod Parker, but the play was brought back for an illegal motion penalty. Philly was instead forced to punt, and the Raiders needed only three plays to reach the end zone. QB Jim Plunkett avoided the rush and scrambled to his left, where he found Kenny King open for what turned into an 80-yard touchdown catch. Oakland was on its way to becoming the first Wild Card team to win the Super Bowl.

SUPER BOWL XVI

San Francisco 49ers 26
Cincinnati Bengals 21

January 24, 1982
Pontiac Silverdome • Pontiac, MI
Attendance: 81,270

MVP: Joe Montana (QB), 49ers
14 of 22 passing, 157 yards, 1 TD

The Big Moment: The Bengals were on the move early in the second quarter looking for a game-tying TD when they committed a critical turnover. QB Ken Anderson had hit Cris Collinsworth across the middle inside the 10-yard line, but the Cincy receiver fumbled after being hit by cornerback Eric Wright and the loose ball was recovered by San Francisco's Ronald Thomas. The 49ers proceeded to go on a time-consuming 92-yard march, culminated with Joe Montana's 11-yard scoring pass to Earl Cooper that made it 14-0.

SUPER BOWL XVII

Washington Redskins 27
Miami Dolphins 17

January 30, 1983
Rose Bowl • Pasadena, CA
Attendance: 103,667

MVP: John Riggins (RB), Redskins
38 carries, 166 yards, 1 TD

The Big Moment: With his team trailing by three early in the fourth quarter and facing a fourth-and-1 at the Dolphins' 43, Redskins head coach Joe Gibbs rolled the dice. He went for it, giving the ball to bruising back John Riggins, who broke free around left end and rumbled for the go-ahead TD with 10:01 remaining. Riggins then carried the ball eight times on his team's next possession, which ran nearly seven minutes off the clock and produced an insurance touchdown. The victory gave Washington its first NFL title in 41 years.

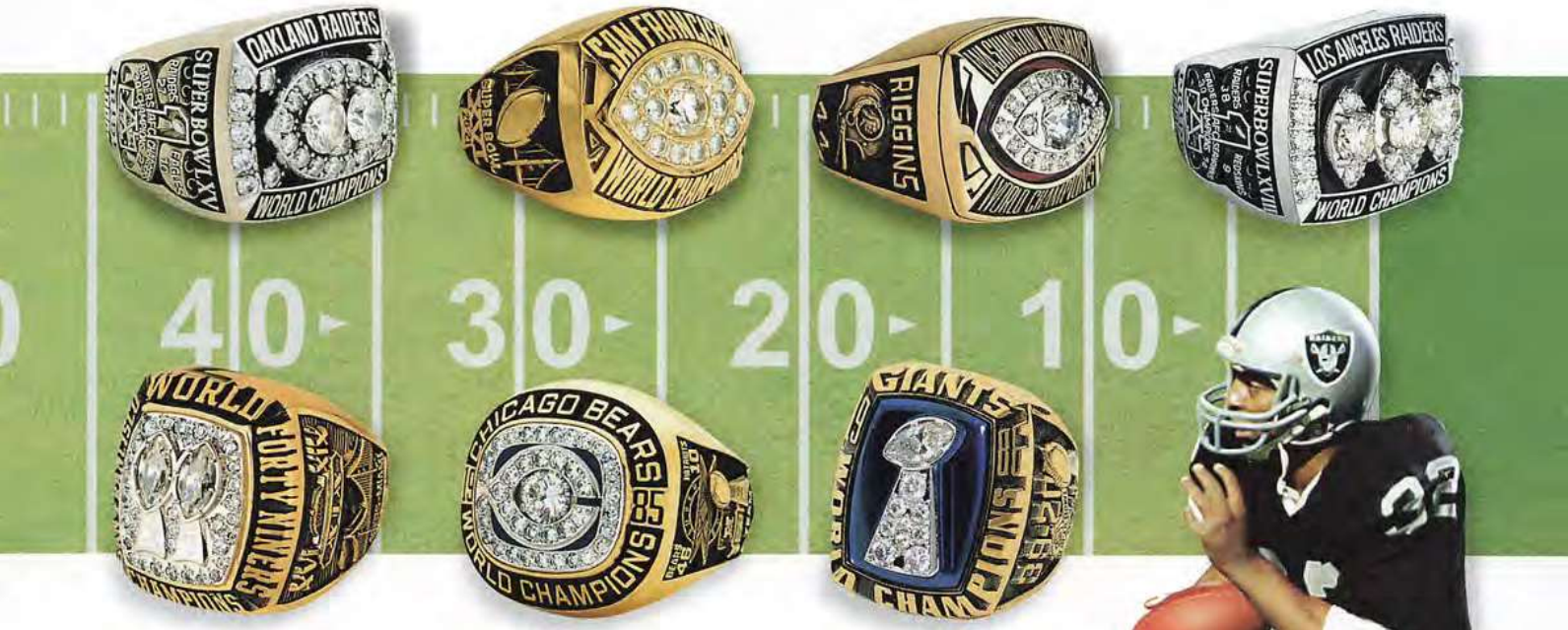
SUPER BOWL XVIII

Los Angeles Raiders 38
Washington Redskins 9

January 22, 1984
Tampa Stadium • Tampa, FL
Attendance: 72,920

MVP: Marcus Allen (RB), Raiders
20 carries, 191 yards, 2 TDs

The Big Moment: Just moments before halftime, Washington looked to catch the Raiders napping and get back into the game. Instead it turned into a back-breaking moment. The Redskins had possession at their own 12-yard line with 12 seconds to go in the second quarter when QB Joe Theismann tried a screen pass to Joe Washington on the left side. But Oakland safety Jack Squirek read it perfectly, stepping in front of the receiver for an interception and heading to the end zone for a TD that put the Raiders safely ahead, 21-3.



SUPER BOWL XIX

San Francisco 49ers 38
Miami Dolphins 16

January 20, 1985
Stanford Stadium • Stanford, CA
Attendance: 84,059

MVP: Joe Montana (QB), 49ers
24 of 35 passing, 331 yards, 3 TDs

The Big Moment: Finding themselves in a 10-7 second-quarter hole, the 49ers struck for touchdowns on three straight possessions to seize the upper hand in this showdown between Joe Montana and Dan Marino. Montana's 8-yard TD pass to Roger Craig capped the first drive and gave San Francisco the lead for good. He then scored the second touchdown on a 6-yard run up the middle, and Craig's 2-yard TD burst made it 28-10. Craig later scored on a 16-yard catch to become the first player with three TDs in a Super Bowl game.

SUPER BOWL XX

Chicago Bears 46
New England Patriots 10

January 26, 1986
Superdome • New Orleans, LA
Attendance: 73,818

MVP: Richard Dent (DE), Bears
1.5 sacks, 7 rushing yards allowed

The Big Moment: A relentless Bears defense submitted one of the most dominant Super Bowl performances ever seen. It began with the game tied, 3-3, in the first quarter when a Richard Dent sack produced a fumble that Dan Hampton recovered deep in Patriots territory. Chicago managed just a field goal on that possession, but got the ball right back when Dent forced another fumble that Mike Singletary recovered. This time, the Bears scored a touchdown on Matt Suhey's 11-yard run and were in complete control from that point on.

SUPER BOWL XXI

New York Giants 39
Denver Broncos 20

January 25, 1987
Rose Bowl • Pasadena, CA
Attendance: 101,063

MVP: Phil Simms (QB), Giants
22 of 25 passing, 268 yards, 3 TDs

The Big Moment: Denver had a golden opportunity to create some distance against the Giants midway through the second quarter, but instead came away empty-handed. Leading 10-7 and with a first-and-goal from the 1, the Broncos failed to get into the end zone on three running plays. Making matters worse, Rich Karlis then missed a 23-yard field goal. The Giants would pull within a point by getting a safety, and took the lead for good on their first possession of the second half when Phil Simms hit Mark Bavaro in the end zone.

Marcus Allen

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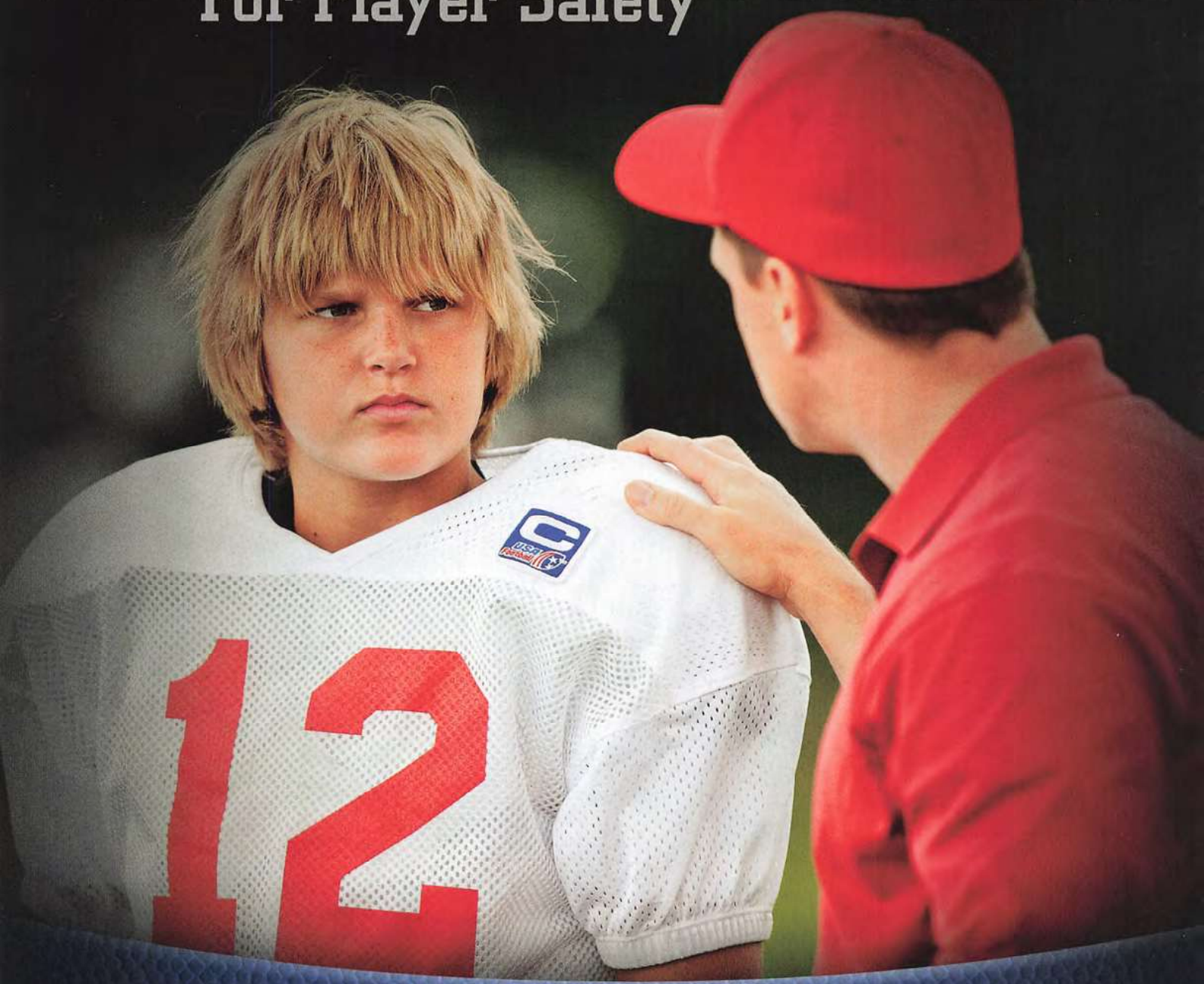

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SUPER BOWL XXII

Washington Redskins 42
Denver Broncos 10

January 31, 1988
Jack Murphy Stadium • San Diego, CA
Attendance: 73,302

MVP: **Doug Williams (QB), Redskins**
18 of 29 passing, 340 yards, 4 TDs

The Big Moment: Not only did the Redskins overcome an early 10-point deficit, they blew the game open with TDs on five straight second-quarter possessions, starting with an 80-yard pass from Doug Williams to Ricky Sanders. After forcing a three-and-out, they netted the go-ahead score on Gary Clark's 27-yard catch. Before the quarter was complete, the Redskins had added a 58-yard TD run by Timmy Smith and scoring passes from Williams to Sanders and Clint Didier. The five scoring drives required just 18 plays.

SUPER BOWL XXIII

San Francisco 49ers 20
Cincinnati Bengals 16

January 22, 1989
Joe Robbie Stadium • Miami, FL
Attendance: 75,129

MVP: **Jerry Rice (WR), 49ers**
11 receptions, 215 yards, 1 TD

The Big Moment: Cincinnati had just moved ahead, 16-13, on a Jim Breech field goal with 3:20 remaining when Joe Montana led the most famous drive in Super Bowl history. He deftly marched the 49ers 92 yards, completing eight of nine passes, capped by a 10-yard TD to John Taylor with 34 seconds to play. Taylor's touchdown grab was his only reception of the game and came two plays after Montana hit Jerry Rice for a 27-yard pick-up when the team faced a second-and-20. San Francisco outgained the Bengals, 453 to 229.

SUPER BOWL XXIV

San Francisco 49ers 55
Denver Broncos 10

January 28, 1990
Superdome • New Orleans, LA
Attendance: 72,919

MVP: **Joe Montana (QB), 49ers**
22 of 29 passing, 297 yards, 5 TDs

The Big Moment: Extended scoring drives helped the 49ers take control on their way to setting a Super Bowl record for points. Joe Montana directed one first-half TD march of 10 plays and another of 14 that ran more than seven minutes off the clock. The rout was set in motion late in the opening quarter with San Francisco leading, 7-3, when Chet Brooks recovered a Denver fumble near midfield. On the ensuing drive, Montana completed two passes to Jerry Rice (for 41 yards) before finding Brent Jones open for a 7-yard TD.

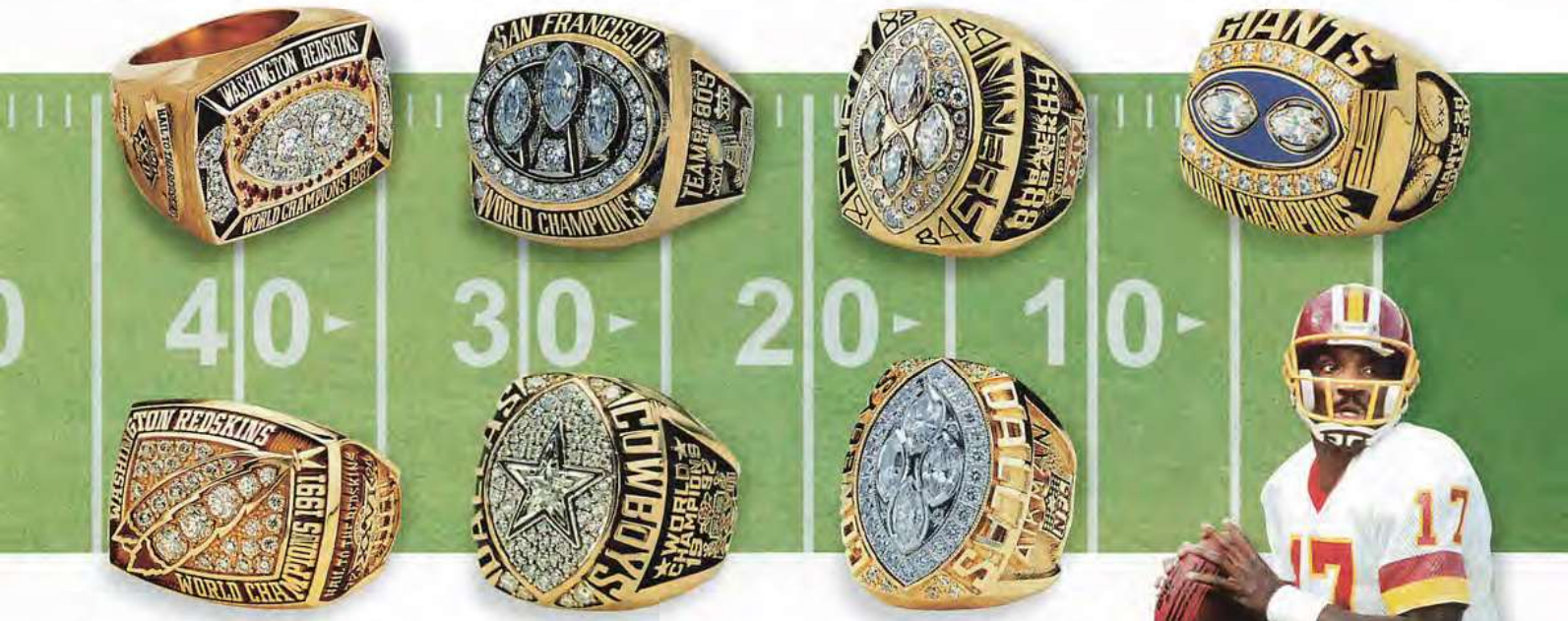
SUPER BOWL XXV

New York Giants 20
Buffalo Bills 19

January 27, 1991
Tampa Stadium • Tampa, FL
Attendance: 73,813

MVP: **Ottis Anderson (RB), Giants**
102 rushing yards, 1 TD; 5 receptions

The Big Moment: Taking the second half kickoff, the underdog Giants milked 9:29 off the clock with a statement drive that produced a go-ahead TD. The 14-play march included a third-and-13 conversion when Mark Ingram caught a short pass over the middle and broke a pair of tackles to pick up 14 yards for a first down at the Buffalo 18. Five plays later, Ottis Anderson reached the end zone on a 1-yard run. New York, which had possession for a Super Bowl-record 40:33, scored the winning points on Matt Bahr's 21-yard FG with 7:20 to go.



SUPER BOWL XXVI

Washington Redskins 37
Buffalo Bills 24

January 26, 1992
Metrodome • Minneapolis, MN
Attendance: 63,130

MVP: **Mark Rypien (QB), Redskins**
18 of 33 passing, 292 yards, 2 TDs

The Big Moment: As its offense took the field after Buffalo had pulled within 24-10 midway through the third quarter, Washington regained the momentum right away. Mark Rypien engineered a 79-yard drive that featured a pair of third-down conversions, finishing it off with a 30-yard scoring strike to Gary Clark in the right side of the end zone. Washington forced turnovers on the next two Bills possessions – the first a fumble recovered by Fred Stokes and then an interception by Brad Edwards – both which led to Chip Lohmiller field goals,

SUPER BOWL XXVII

Dallas Cowboys 52
Buffalo Bills 17

January 31, 1993
Rose Bowl • Pasadena, CA
Attendance: 98,374

MVP: **Troy Aikman (QB), Cowboys**
22 of 30 passing, 273 yards, 4 TDs

The Big Moment: Dallas converted a Super Bowl-record nine turnovers into 35 points, the biggest of those coming late in the second quarter. It happened just after Cowboys QB Troy Aikman hit Michael Irvin on a slant for a 19-yard touchdown and 21-10 lead. On Buffalo's next play from scrimmage, running back Thurman Thomas fumbled after making a catch. Jimmie Jones recovered for Dallas and Aikman immediately sought out Irvin again, this time for an 18-yard TD that gave the receiver two scores within a span of 18 seconds.

SUPER BOWL XXVIII

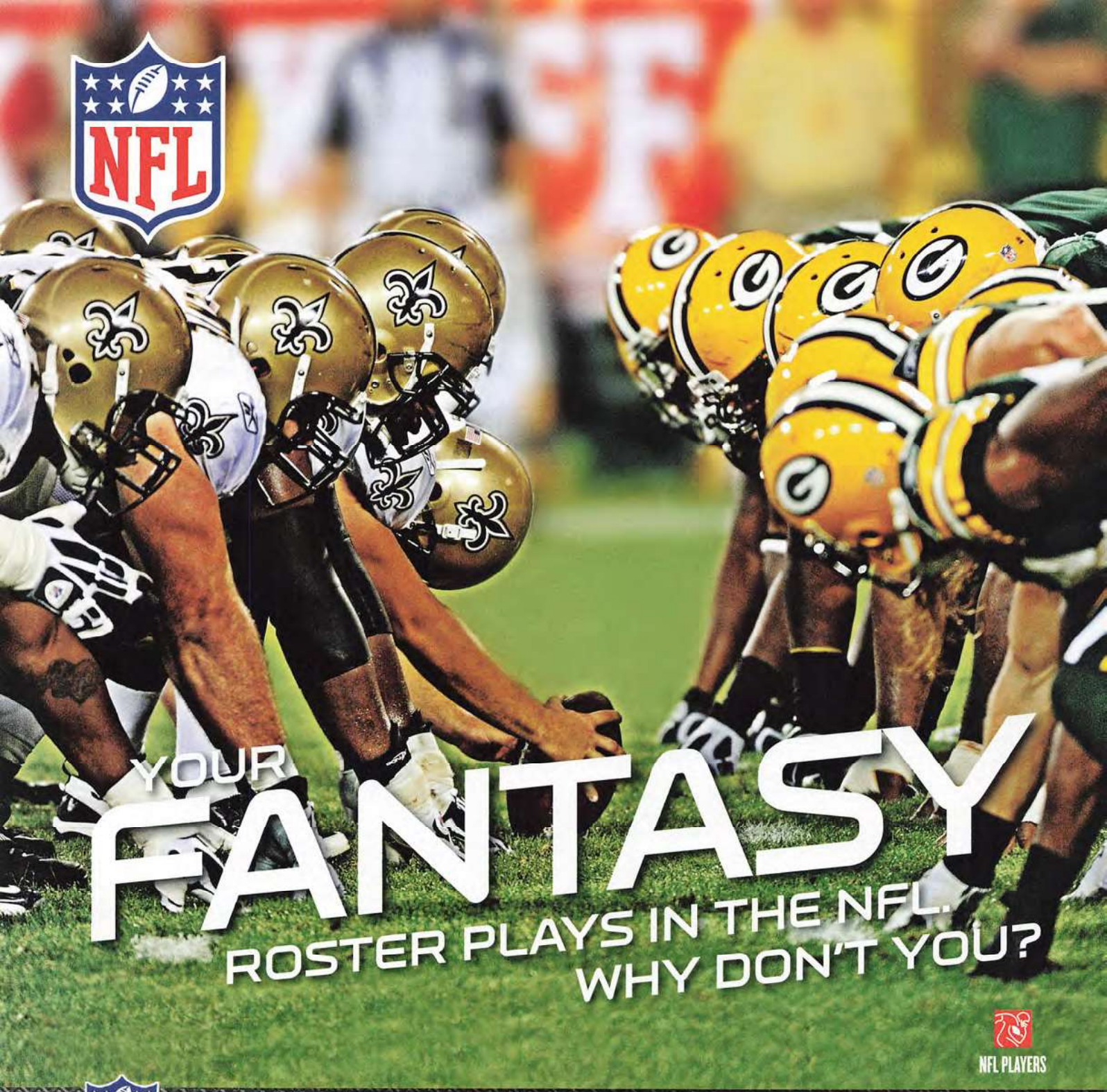
Dallas Cowboys 30
Buffalo Bills 13

January 30, 1994
Georgia Dome • Atlanta, GA
Attendance: 72,817

MVP: **Emmitt Smith (RB), Cowboys**
30 carries, 132 yards, 2 TDs

The Big Moment: Just 55 seconds into the second half, Dallas defensive tackle Leon Lett stripped Bills running back Thurman Thomas. The loose ball was scooped up by safety James Washington, who raced 46 yards for a touchdown that tied the game, 13-13. After forcing the Bills to punt, the Cowboys drove 64 yards in eight plays, all but three of those yards coming on the ground via Emmitt Smith. He capped the march with a 15-yard TD dart that put Dallas ahead for good with 8:42 left in the third quarter.

Doug Williams



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SUPER BOWL XXIX

San Francisco 49ers 49
San Diego Chargers 26

January 29, 1995
Joe Robbie Stadium • Miami, FL
Attendance: 74,107

MVP: **Steve Young (QB), 49ers**
24 of 36 passing, 325 yards, 6 TDs

The Big Moment: Steve Young, who would deliver a Super Bowl performance for the ages by throwing six TD passes, wasted little time getting started. His 44-yard scoring pass to Jerry Rice came on the third play of the game, while the next time the 49ers touched the ball, he marched them 79 yards in four plays, reaching the end zone on a 51-yard pass to Ricky Watters. Although San Diego answered with a TD of its own, the 49ers struck right back, going ahead, 21-7, on Young's 5-yard TD pass to fullback William Floyd.

SUPER BOWL XXX

Dallas Cowboys 27
Pittsburgh Steelers 17

January 28, 1996
Sun Devil Stadium • Tempe, AZ
Attendance: 76,347

MVP: **Larry Brown (CB), Cowboys**
2 interceptions

The Big Moment: Larry Brown's second interception of the game was followed by a backbreaking touchdown that clinched the Cowboys' third crown in four years. The Steelers trailed by only three points and had the ball with 4:15 remaining when Brown stepped in front of a Neil O'Donnell pass and returned it 33 yards to the Pittsburgh 6. Two plays later, Emmitt Smith scored on a 4-yard run that nailed down the win. Brown's first interception also resulted in a Cowboys TD – a 1-yard Smith run that had made the score 20-7.

SUPER BOWL XXXI

Green Bay Packers 35
New England Patriots 21

January 26, 1997
Superdome • New Orleans, LA
Attendance: 72,301

MVP: **Desmond Howard (KR-PR), Packers**
244 return yards, 99-yard KO return

The Big Moment: Right after a TD had drawn the Patriots within six points, Desmond Howard returned a kickoff 99 yards for a score that reversed the momentum and carried the Packers to victory. Brett Favre had thrown a pair of scoring passes – including a 54-yarder to Andre Rison on Green Bay's second play from scrimmage – but New England only trailed 27-21 after Curtis Martin's 18-yard run with 3:27 to go in the third quarter. Following Howard's return, the Patriots managed just one first down and threw two interceptions.

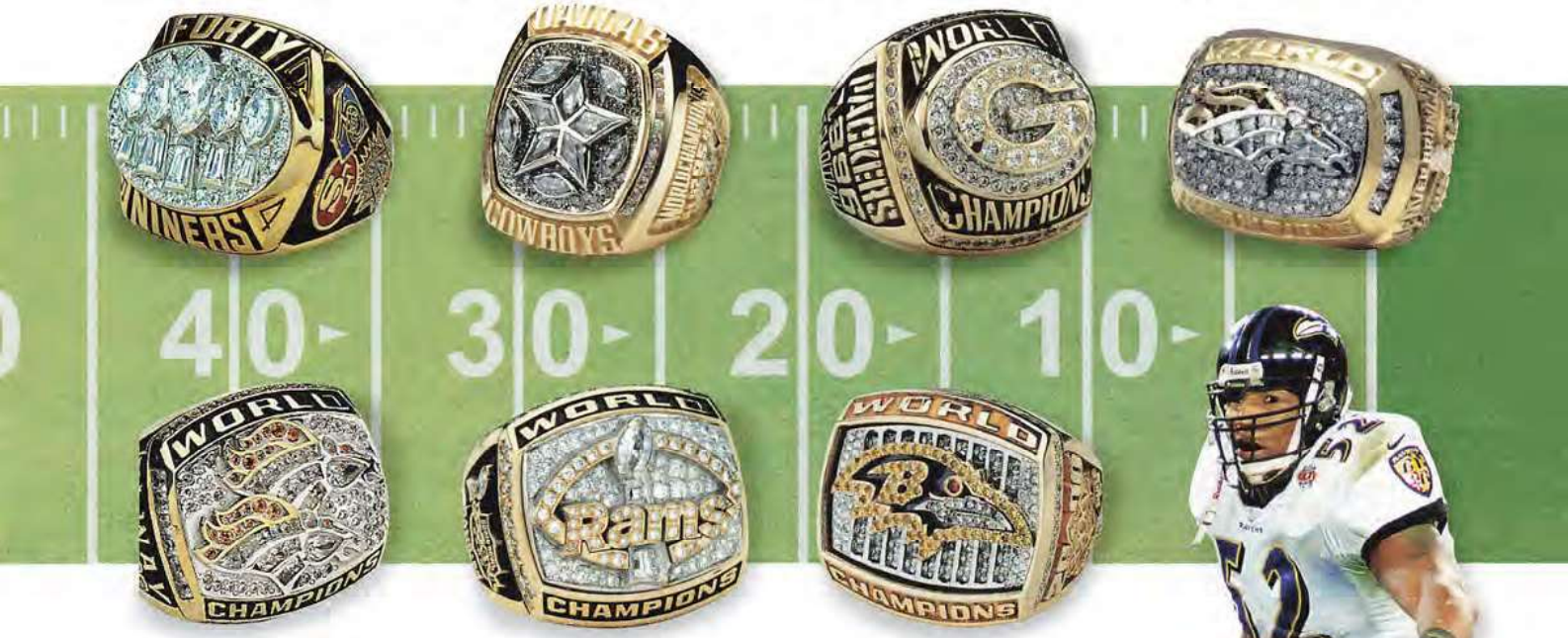
SUPER BOWL XXXII

Denver Broncos 31
Green Bay Packers 24

January 25, 1998
Qualcomm Stadium • San Diego, CA
Attendance: 68,912

MVP: **Terrell Davis (RB), Broncos**
30 carries, 157 yards, 3 TDs

The Big Moment: With the score tied, 24-24, as the clock counted down, running back Terrell Davis literally carried the Broncos to victory. He ran the ball four times for 21 yards, with a 17-yard gain setting up his 1-yard touchdown with 1:45 remaining. It was his third rushing TD of the game, a Super Bowl record. On that same drive, Denver gained 23 yards on a John Elway to Howard Griffith pass and picked up another 15 when a defender grabbed Davis' facemask. Green Bay's final drive was stopped on downs.



SUPER BOWL XXXIII

Denver Broncos 34
Atlanta Falcons 19

January 31, 1999
Pro Player Stadium • Miami, FL
Attendance: 74,803

MVP: **John Elway (QB), Broncos**
18 of 29 passing, 336 yards, 1 TD

The Big Moment: Darrien Gordon ended back-to-back Falcons drives with interceptions deep in Broncos territory, setting up touchdowns that allowed Denver to coast home. It was a 17-6 Broncos lead late in the third quarter when Gordon picked off a Chris Chandler pass at the 18-yard line and brought it back 54 yards. Five plays later, Howard Griffith scored on a 1-yard run. Gordon's next interception came at the 2, and he returned it to midfield, leading to John Elway's 3-yard TD run that put Denver ahead, 31-6.

SUPER BOWL XXXIV

St. Louis Rams 23
Tennessee Titans 16

January 30, 2000
Georgia Dome • Atlanta, GA
Attendance: 72,625

MVP: **Kurt Warner (QB), Rams**
24 of 45 passing, 414 yards, 2 TDs

The Big Moment: The Titans had just pulled even – after trailing by 16 points in the third quarter – when the Rams' Kurt Warner pierced their Super Bowl hopes. Al Del Greco's 43-yard field goal with 2:12 to play tied the game, but on the next play from scrimmage, Warner saw Torry Holt free along the right side for what became a 73-yard TD pass and the game-winning points. Tennessee nearly rallied again, reaching the Rams' 10-yard line, but on the final play, Kevin Dyson was tackled by Mike Jones one yard shy of the goal line.

SUPER BOWL XXXV

Baltimore Ravens 34
New York Giants 7

January 28, 2001
Raymond James Stadium • Tampa, FL
Attendance: 71,921

MVP: **Ray Lewis (LB), Ravens**
Defense allowed 152 total yards

The Big Moment: In a dizzying 36-second span of the third quarter, the Ravens and Giants combined to score three touchdowns. Baltimore cornerback Duane Starks started it with a 49-yard interception return for a TD that pushed his team's lead to 17-0. Ron Dixon answered for the Giants by bringing back the ensuing kickoff 97 yards for a score, but Jermaine Lewis immediately countered with an 83-yard kickoff return of his own. The Ravens would allow only one first down on New York's final four possessions.

Ray Lewis

Paul Spinelli/AP Images

SUPER BOWL XXXVI

New England Patriots 20
St. Louis Rams 17

February 3, 2002
Superdome • New Orleans, LA
Attendance: 72,922

MVP: Tom Brady (QB), Patriots
16 of 27 passing, 145 yards, 1 TD

The Big Moment: Adam Vinatieri's 48-yard field goal proved the difference as the Patriots prevailed in the first Super Bowl won on the final play. New England had built a 17-3 lead, but the Rams tied things with two fourth-quarter touchdowns – the second with 1:30 to go – before Patriots quarterback Tom Brady positioned his team for the game-winning kick. Brady completed five passes on the quick drive, three of those to J.R. Redmond and another a 23-yarder to Troy Brown that brought the ball into St. Louis territory.

SUPER BOWL XXXVII

Tampa Bay Buccaneers 48
Oakland Raiders 21

January 26, 2003
Qualcomm Stadium • San Diego, CA
Attendance: 67,603

MVP: Dexter Jackson (S), Buccaneers
2 of team's 5 interceptions

The Big Moment: Touchdowns to end the first half and open the second half keyed the Bucs' big win. Leading 13-3, Tampa Bay drove 77 yards, getting into the end zone on Brad Johnson's 5-yard pass to Keenan McCardell with just 30 seconds left in the half. On their first possession after the break, the Bucs put together a 14-play, 89-yard drive that took nearly eight minutes and was capped by Johnson's 8-yard toss to McCardell. Moments later, Dwight Smith returned an interception 44 yards for a TD to push the lead to 34-3.

SUPER BOWL XXXVIII

New England Patriots 32
Carolina Panthers 29

February 1, 2004
Reliant Stadium • Houston, TX
Attendance: 71,525

MVP: Tom Brady (QB), Patriots
32 of 48 passing, 354 yards, 3 TDs

The Big Moment: Adam Vinatieri was the Super Bowl hero for the second time in three seasons, kicking a 41-yard field goal with four seconds left to cap a wild fourth quarter that saw 37 points scored. Carolina briefly took the lead on an 85-yard Muhsin Muhammad TD reception and later tied things up on Ricky Proehl's 12-yard scoring catch with 1:08 to play. However, that left enough time for Tom Brady, who swiftly drove his team 46 yards to position Vinatieri, the big play being a 17-yard completion to Deion Branch.

SUPER BOWL XXXIX

New England Patriots 24
Philadelphia Eagles 21

February 6, 2005
ALLTEL Stadium • Jacksonville, FL
Attendance: 78,125

MVP: Deion Branch, (WR), Patriots
11 receptions, 133 yards

The Big Moment: In an evenly matched battle, a key sequence placed the Patriots on the path to victory. Brian Westbrook's 10-yard touchdown catch had tied the game for the Eagles, 14-14, but Kevin Faulk keyed the next Patriots drive – catching screen passes of 13 and 14 yards, and gaining another 12 on a run – and Corey Dillon finished it with a go-ahead 2-yard TD burst with 13:44 to play. The Patriots' defense then forced a three-and-out, setting up Adam Vinatieri's 22-yard field goal that pushed the advantage to 10 points.

SUPER BOWL XL

Pittsburgh Steelers 21
Seattle Seahawks 10

February 5, 2006
Ford Field • Detroit, MI
Attendance: 68,206

MVP: Hines Ward (WR), Steelers
5 receptions, 123 yards, 1 TD

The Big Moment: Despite struggling most of the game, the Seahawks stayed close until committing a critical fourth-quarter turnover. They were trailing, 14-10, when they reached the Steelers' 19-yard line. After a holding penalty and a sack, Seattle QB Matt Hasselbeck was intercepted by cornerback Ike Taylor. Pittsburgh then cashed in when Antwaan Randle El, a quarterback in college, took a handoff, sprinted right, and threw a strike to Hines Ward for a 43-yard TD. It was the first Super Bowl touchdown pass thrown by a wide receiver.

SUPER BOWL XLI

Indianapolis Colts 29
Chicago Bears 17

February 4, 2007
Dolphin Stadium • Miami, FL
Attendance: 74,512

MVP: Peyton Manning (QB), Colts
25 of 38 passing, 247 yards, 1 TD

The Big Moment: Kelvin Hayden's fourth-quarter interception return for a TD gave the Colts the breathing room they needed in this triumph. Chicago hit the scoreboard right away on Devin Hester's 92-yard return of the opening kickoff. And while Dominic Rhodes' short scoring run gave Indy a lead it would never relinquish, it remained just a 22-17 game until Hayden stepped in front of a Rex Grossman pass and ran 56 yards for a TD with 11:44 to go. Bob Sanders' interception on the Bears' next possession locked up the win.

NFL & AFL CHAMPIONS (1920 - 1969)

Prior to 1932, the NFL team with the best record was champion. From 1966-1969, the NFL and AFL held separate title games with the winners meeting in the Super Bowl.

NFL CHAMPIONS

1920 ....Akron Pros
1921 ....Chicago Staleys
1922 ....Canton Bulldogs
1923 ....Canton Bulldogs
1924 ....Cleveland Bulldogs
1925 ....Chicago Cardinals
1926 ....Frankfort Yellow Jackets
1927 ....New York Giants
1928 ....Providence Steam Roller
1929 ....Green Bay Packers
1930 ....Green Bay Packers
1931 ....Green Bay Packers

AP Images

Steve Van Buren scores the lone TD in the Eagles' 1948 title-game win over the Cardinals.

SUPER BOWL XLII

New York Giants 17
New England Patriots 14

February 3, 2008
Univ. of Phoenix Stadium • Glendale, AZ
Attendance: 71,101

MVP: Eli Manning (QB), Giants
19 of 34 passing, 255 yards, 2 TDs

The Big Moment: No catch in Super Bowl – and perhaps all of pro football – history is more remembered than David Tyree's sensational 32-yard grab that set up the Giants' game-winning TD. Facing a third-and-5 at his own 44-yard line, New York QB Eli Manning avoided a fierce rush and floated the ball down the middle, where a leaping Tyree trapped it against his helmet while being tackled. After another third-down conversion (on a 12-yard pass to Steve Smith), Manning hit Plaxico Burress for a 13-yard TD with 35 seconds to play.

SUPER BOWL XLIII

Pittsburgh Steelers 27
Arizona Cardinals 23

February 1, 2009
Raymond James Stadium • Tampa, FL
Attendance: 70,774

MVP: Santonio Holmes (WR), Steelers
9 receptions, 131 yards, 1 TD

The Big Moment: In a game with a long list of clutch plays, the Steelers saved the biggest for last. Arizona nearly pulled off what would have been the biggest comeback in Super Bowl history, scoring 16 points in the fouth quarter and taking a 23-20 lead on Larry Fitzgerald's 64-yard TD catch with 2:37 to play. Pittsburgh calmly answered with a 79-yard drive as the clock counted down, picking up 40 yards on a Santonio Holmes reception and winning the game on Holmes' 5-yard touchdown grab in the right corner of the end zone.

SUPER BOWL XLIV

New Orleans Saints 31
Indianapolis Colts 17

February 7, 2010
Sun Life Stadium • Miami, FL
Attendance: 74,059

MVP: Drew Brees (QB), Saints
32 of 39 passing, 288 yards, 2 TDs

The Big Moment: A daring play call to start the second half swung momentum as the Saints won their first Super Bowl. With his team in a 10-6 halftime hole, New Orleans coach Sean Payton called for Garrett Hartley to try an onside kick. The loose ball was recovered by Chris Reis, setting up a six-play drive capped by Drew Brees' 16-yard TD pass to Pierre Thomas. Jeremy Shockey's fourth-quarter scoring grab put New Orleans in front to stay, while Tracy Porter ended a final Colts threat with his 74-yard interception-return TD.

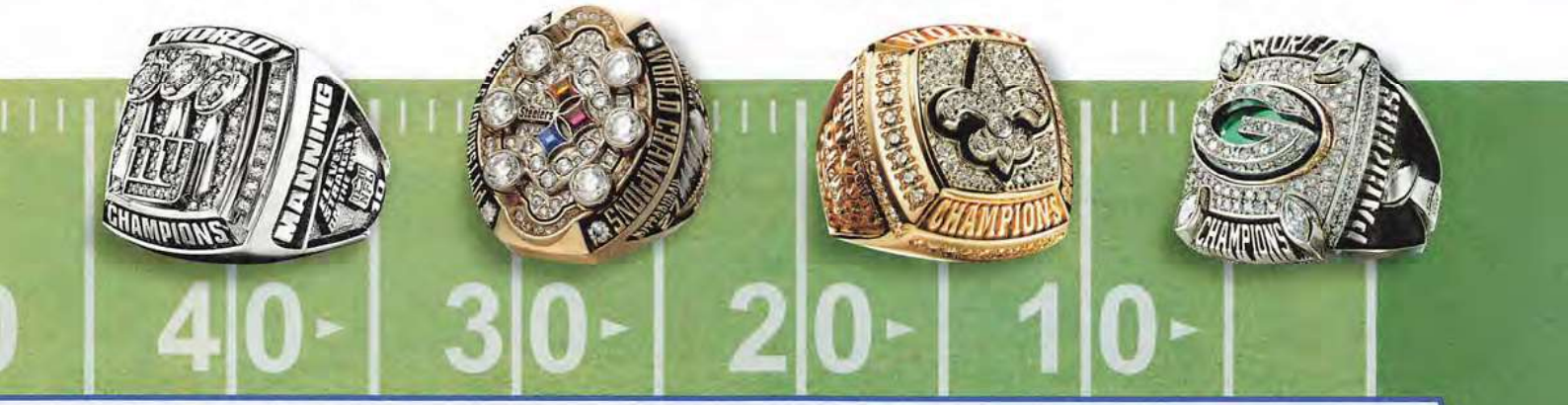
SUPER BOWL XLV

Green Bay Packers 31
Pittsburgh Steelers 25

February 6, 2011
Cowboys Stadium • Arlington, Texas
Attendance: 103,219

MVP: Aaron Rodgers (QB), Packers
24 of 39 passing, 304 yards, 3 TDs

The Big Moment: It was early in the fourth quarter and Pittsburgh was on the move, threatening to come all the way back from a 21-3 deficit, when Packers linebacker Clay Matthews made the play of the game. He stripped Steelers running back Rashard Mendenhall at the Green Bay 33, with the fumble recovered by teammate Desmond Bishop. QB Aaron Rodgers proceeded to drive the Packers 55 yards in eight plays, finishing the march with an 8-yard toss to Greg Jennings that opened the lead to 28-17.



1932 ....@ Chicago Bears 9, Portsmouth Spartans 0
1933 ....@ Chicago Bears 23, New York Giants 21
1934 ....@ New York Giants 30, Chicago Bears 13
1935 ....@ Detroit Lions 26, New York Giants 7
1936* ....Green Bay Packers 21, Boston Braves 6
1937 ....Washington Redskins 28, @ Chicago Bears 21
1938 ....@ New York Giants 23, Green Bay Packers 17
1939 ....@ Green Bay Packers 27, New York Giants 0
1940 ....Chicago Bears 73, @ Washington Redskins 0
1941 ....@ Chicago Bears 37, New York Giants 9
1942 ....@ Washington Redskins 14, Chicago Bears 6
1943 ....@ Chicago Bears 41, Washington Redskins 21
1944 ....Green Bay Packers 14, @ New York Giants 7
1945 ....@ Cleveland Rams 15, Washington Redskins 14
1946 ....Chicago Bears 24, @ New York Giants 14
1947 ....@ Chicago Cardinals 28, Philadelphia Eagles 21
1948 ....@ Philadelphia Eagles 7, Chicago Cardinals 0
1949 ....Philadelphia Eagles 14, @ Los Angeles Rams 0
1950 ....@ Cleveland Browns 30, Los Angeles Rams 28
1951 ....@ Los Angeles Rams 24, Cleveland Browns 17
1952 ....Detroit Lions 17, @ Cleveland Browns 7
1953 ....@ Detroit Lions 17, Cleveland Browns 16
1954 ....@ Cleveland Browns 56, Detroit Lions 10
1955 ....Cleveland Browns 38, @ Los Angeles Rams 14
1956 ....@ New York Giants 47, Chicago Bears 7
1957 ....@ Detroit Lions 59, Cleveland Browns 14
1958 ....Baltimore Colts 23, @ New York Giants 17 (OT)
1959 ....@ Baltimore Colts 31, New York Giants 16
1960 ....@ Philadelphia Eagles 17, Green Bay Packers 13
1961 ....@ Green Bay Packers 37, New York Giants 0
1962 ....Green Bay Packers 16, @ New York Giants 7
1963 ....@ Chicago Bears 14, New York Giants 10
1964 ....@ Cleveland Browns 27, Baltimore Colts 0
1965 ....@ Green Bay Packers 23, Cleveland Browns 12
1966 ....Green Bay Packers 34, @ Dallas Cowboys 27
1967 ....@ Green Bay Packers 21, Dallas Cowboys 17
1968 ....Baltimore Colts 34, @ Cleveland Browns 0
1969 ....@ Minnesota Vikings 27, Cleveland Browns 7

*Played at the Polo Grounds (New York, NY)

AFL CHAMPIONS

1960 ....@ Houston Oilers 24, Los Angeles Chargers 16
1961 ....Houston Oilers 10, @ San Diego Chargers 3
1962 ....Dallas Texans 20, @ Houston Oilers 17 (OT)
1963 ....@ San Diego Chargers 51, Boston Patriots 10
1964 ....@ Buffalo Bills 20, San Diego Chargers 7
1965 ....Buffalo Bills 23, @ San Diego Chargers 0
1966 ....Kansas City Chiefs 31, @ Buffalo Bills 7
1967 ....@ Oakland Raiders 40, Houston Oilers 7
1968 ....@ New York Jets 27, Oakland Raiders 23
1969 ....Kansas City Chiefs 17, @ Oakland Raiders 7

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ALWAYS WITH PASSION

BY CHALLENGING THE STATUS QUO, AL DAVIS DROVE A TEAM—AND THE GAME HE LOVED—TO GREATNESS.

by Gil Brandt

Courtesy of Oakland Raiders

We were rivals for sure. But in this business, if you stay around long enough, rivalry becomes respect, respect becomes admiration, and admiration becomes friendship.

Above all else, I considered Al Davis my friend. When he passed away on October 8, it was a loss that touched many. But this sad occasion also allowed us to revisit the reasons why he was a giant in our game and beloved by those who knew him best.

The rivalry part was obvious. Al represented the American Football League, first as a coach, then as commissioner, and finally, and most famously, as the Raiders' owner. He was a rebel, a contrarian, and an obstacle to what those of us in the NFL considered the "pro football order."

Yet the better I got to know Al—speaking with him while scouting, at games, and at various league meetings—the more impossible it became to view him simply as an opponent. He was good at what he did...really good.

Those in the NFL office saw the same skills. When the merger took place—after a contentious co-existence—Al was handpicked by Commissioner Pete Rozelle to help blend the leagues together, solving sticky problems like playing rules, division alignment, and the draft. It was a nod to the power of his ideas, vision, and creativity.

There's a telling story of when Al coached at Adelphi College in the early 1950s and he implemented an offense specifically designed to neutralize Andy Robustelli, the star lineman for Arnold College who later became a Pro Football Hall of Famer. The strategy worked, not just once but for two straight years. People had come to see Robustelli... they went away impressed with Al Davis.

Some would like to simplify Al's football philosophy to three words: "Just win, baby." But the game is not that easy and he knew it. Al won because he looked at football differently.

He embraced offensive guru Sid Gillman's "vertical game" upon becoming coach of the Raiders. It was unconventional, but so was Al. He thrived on projecting players to different positions, moving them like chess pieces. Billy Cannon, Raymond Chester, Todd Christensen, Ethan Horton, and Derrick Ramsey went from the offensive backfield to tight end; Dan Conners and Matt Millen were defensive linemen who became middle linebackers; Ronald Curry switched from quarterback to wide receiver; Lester Hayes was a college linebacker-turned-cornerback. The list goes on and on.

And then there's speed. Al loved speed. One of the lasting images I'll have of him is at the Combine, sitting at the starting line for the 40 holding a stopwatch. It's no wonder guys like Willie Gault, James Jett, Jacoby Ford, and Cliff Branch all ended up in Silver and Black.

When these ingredients were mixed together—along with a dash of attitude—they produced something special. The Raiders won the 1967 AFL Championship, and they later captured three Super Bowls in an eight-year span, beating the Vikings (XI), Eagles (XV), and Redskins (XVIII) by a combined 64 points. From 1963-1991, no team in pro sports had a better record.

If you're successful and, OK, a touch abrasive, you're certain to make a few enemies. Al had his share. But they didn't know the real Al Davis, for there was so much to him beyond his public persona, it would have melted his harshest critic.

He was very much the racial egalitarian, challenging discriminatory policies in the South and canvassing traditionally black colleges looking to discover prospects who might otherwise be passed by. He welcomed former players—superstars and spare parts alike—back into the Raiders' fold. It's no wonder so many of them asked Al to make their presentation speech when they reached the Hall of Fame.

Likewise, Al never forgot those who were kind to him, and he made a lot of behind-the-scenes efforts on behalf of friends and employees to ensure they received the finest medical care available, whether they could afford it or not.

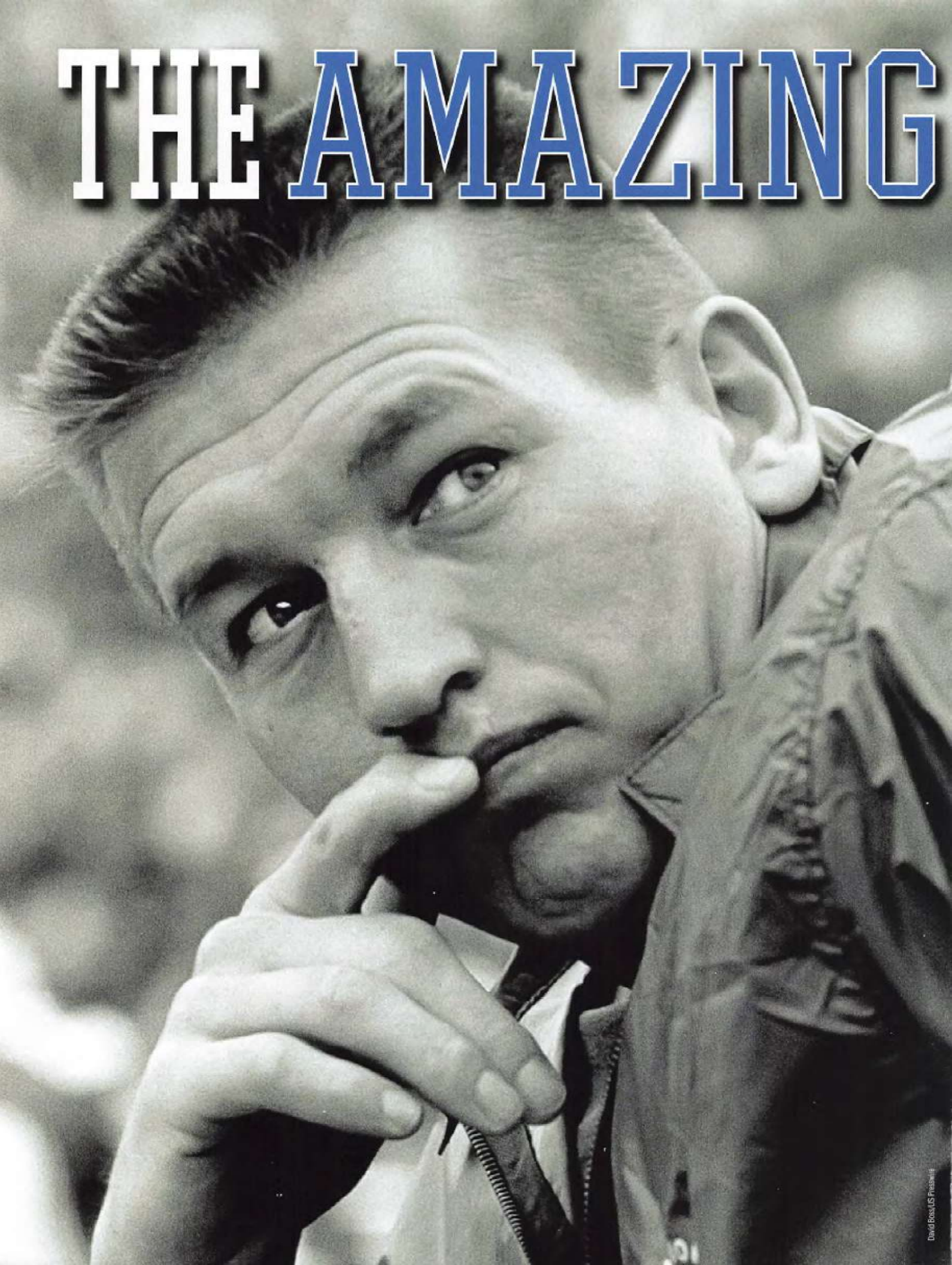
"Don't treat people the way you want to be treated," he would say. "Treat them the way *they* want to be treated."

That loyalty factor extended to where he had coached and attended school—Erasmus Hall High School, Wittenberg, Syracuse, Adelphi, Fort Belvoir, The Citadel, and Southern Cal. He was supportive of each program, even naming his son after Mark Clark, the heroic World War II general who was president at The Citadel during the time Al served as the school's line coach and recruiter.

Another of Al's famous sayings was, "I'd rather be right than be consistent." Al Davis achieved greatness by doing what he believed was right—whether or not others saw the world the same way. His lasting influence on an organization, on our game, and in so many people's lives is a testament to that.

Gil Brandt was vice president of player personnel for the Dallas Cowboys from 1960-89 and is now senior analyst for nfl.com.

THE AMAZING



David Boss/US Presswire

JOHNNY U

WITH INSTINCTS AND GRIT THAT MAY NEVER BE MATCHED, JOHNNY UNITAS HELPED TURN PRO FOOTBALL INTO AMERICA'S GAME.

by Ray Didinger

The career of Johnny Unitas cannot be measured in years, yards, or even championships. As quarterback of the Baltimore Colts, Unitas did more than play the game of professional football; he carried it to the forefront of American sports.

As the NFL gathers in Indianapolis to celebrate the global spectacle known as the Super Bowl, it's hard to believe that once upon a time pro football was a minor sport. Baseball was bigger; college football was bigger; even boxing and horse racing had wider followings. It was Unitas who changed the landscape forever.

He won the 1958 NFL Championship Game, now known as the "Greatest Game Ever Played," and in the process brought millions of new fans to the league. It was the NFL's first sudden death overtime game and Unitas commanded a national TV stage with a steely-eyed daring that kept the audience on the edge of its seat. It's remained there ever since.

The Colts defeated the New York Giants, 23-17, and Unitas was named Most Valuable Player, but what stands out about that performance is how it elevated not only the profile of pro football but also the art of playing quarterback. On that day, Johnny Unitas raised the bar for every QB who followed.

There were great quarterbacks before him: Sammy Baugh, Sid Luckman, and Otto Graham certainly fit that description. But Unitas was the first of the modern quarterbacks, the one whose skills provided a bridge from the leather helmet era to the wide-open game of today. He played the position with the precision, touch, and timing that almost every quarterback since—from Joe Montana to Troy Aikman to Tom Brady—has tried to emulate.

Longtime Colts quarterback Peyton Manning has shattered most of Unitas' records and one day their busts will sit side-by-side in the Pro Football Hall of Fame, yet Manning puts Unitas on a pedestal. He knows that any time he drives his team down the field in the last two minutes, working the clock, calling plays at the line, completing passes to the sidelines, he's borrowing from a script Unitas wrote a half century ago.

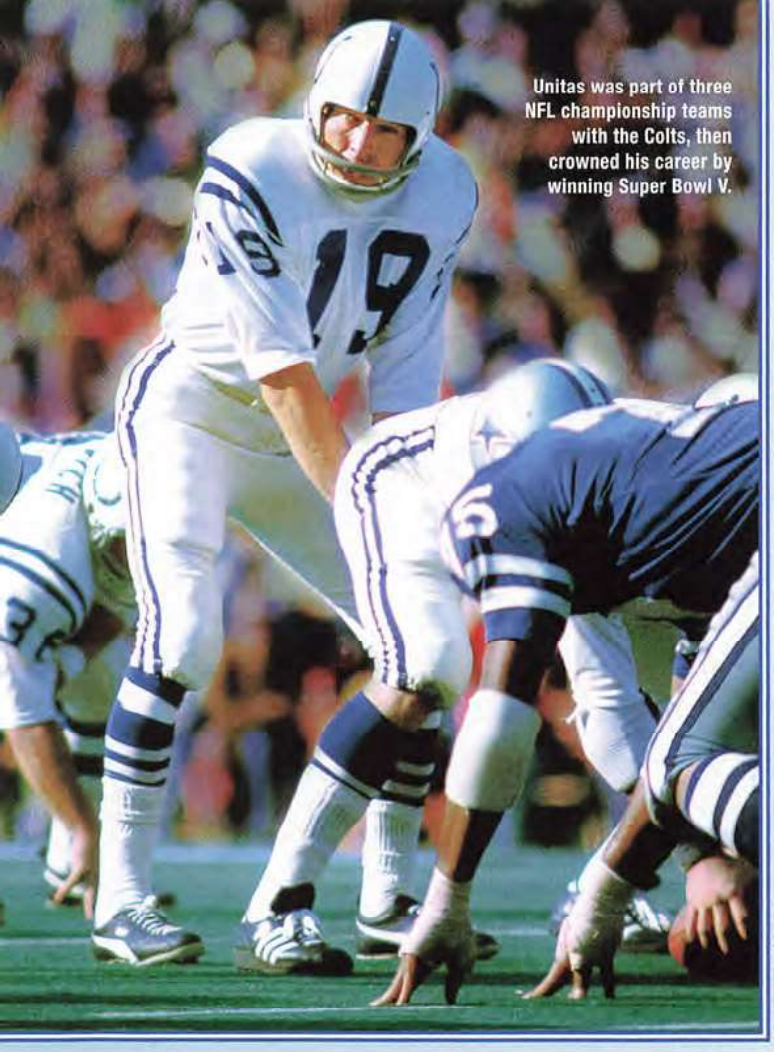
Unitas was a pioneer, an iconic figure in his crew cut and high-topped black shoes who led NFL offenses into a new frontier.

"I always felt John invented the two-minute drill," attests Don Shula, who

Malcolm Emmons/US Presswire

U.S. Army/AP Images

Whether dissecting an NFL defense or throwing the ball with U.S. troops stationed in Vietnam (right), Johnny Unitas had a powerful presence.



Unitas was part of three NFL championship teams with the Colts, then crowned his career by winning Super Bowl V.

Darryl Norenberg/US Presswire

coached Unitas from 1963 through 1969. "He seemed to have a clock in his head and always knew how much time he had to work with. I don't even think the term 'two-minute drill' existed then. Now teams practice it and keep statistics on it. All those concepts, John created."

When he retired following the 1973 season, Unitas held 22 NFL passing records, among them completions (2,830), passing yards (40,239), and touchdown passes (290). He still owns the mark for consecutive games throwing at least one TD pass, his 47 in a row being the football equivalent of Joe DiMaggio's 56-game hitting streak.

The most revealing aspect of that particular record is that Unitas didn't even realize it existed for almost three years. Finally, a Baltimore sportswriter did the math and told Unitas he had a record streak going. The QB shrugged it off. Individual statistics, even league records, meant nothing to him.

"Winning games is the only thing that matters," he said. "You go into a game to win as a team, not set records."

Unitas' personality was that of a blue-collar working man, a reflection of both his adopted home (Baltimore) and the times (the '50s). While he became a national celebrity after the 1958 championship game—and led the Colts to a second NFL title the following season—Unitas was making just $14,000 a year. He lived in a working-class neighborhood and held an offseason job at Bethlehem Steel to help pay the bills.

Most players at the time did the same thing, and it bred a special kind of closeness. They were neighbors; they were buddies; they shared rides to practice and beers afterwards. When Colts fullback Alan Ameche bought his first house, Unitas installed the kitchen floor.

There was no glitter to Unitas, leading writer Wells Twombly of the *San Francisco Examiner* to note: "He has a basic coarseness like home-woven cloth." It's not surprising given his background. Unitas was 4 years old when his father died, and as a youngster he hauled coal through the streets of Pittsburgh to support his family. Years later, he was drafted by his hometown Steelers only to be cut before ever appearing in a game.

Unitas then played semi-pro football for $6 a game, hoping some NFL team would give him another shot. The Colts did, signing him to a $7,000 contract in 1956. When starting quarterback George Shaw was injured early that season, Unitas stepped in and changed the destiny of the franchise.

He was a shade over six feet tall and weighed 190 pounds. Tex Maule of *Sports Illustrated* wrote: "His shoulders slope in, his skin is marble white. He is not overly equipped with muscles." None of that mattered though, because, in the way he played, Unitas was as much an artist as an athlete.

Teamed with two other Hall of Famers—split end Raymond Berry and flanker Lenny Moore—Unitas fronted the Colts' dynamic passing attack. He practiced for hours with Berry until their timing was perfect, and in games Unitas could throw a pass before Berry even turned. When Berry made his cut, the ball was there waiting for him.

Look back at the Colts' last two drives in the '58 title game: Unitas threw five passes to Berry and completed all five for 94 yards. It was the same surgical "we're-going-to-throw-it-and-you-can't-stop-us" execution we saw years later with Montana-to-Jerry Rice in Super Bowl XXIII.

But with Unitas, it was all his creation. Unlike Montana and other modern quarterbacks, Unitas didn't have a coach calling the plays for him. He scoffed at the very idea. Asked how he'd react if a coach tried to send in plays via helmet transmitter, he replied, "I'd get very deaf."

Weeb Ewbank said he coached Unitas in his first two years with the Colts, but after that, "John taught me. [He] could see more walking to the line of scrimmage than most people could see studying film for a week, so when he called a play, the guys had total confidence."

And no one was more confident than Unitas himself. One day, former Giants general manager Ernie Accorsi, a Colts publicist back in 1970, asked Unitas if he could recount the winning drive in the '58 championship game. The QB remembered each play—the call, the formation, the defense—in detail, even though more than a decade had passed.

Accorsi then asked Unitas if he felt nervous at any point. After all, this was the first sudden death overtime in NFL history. Accorsi recalls Unitas looking him in the eye and saying: "You only get nervous if you don't know what you're doing. I knew what I was doing."

Yes, he did.

Unitas died of a heart attack in 2002 at the age of 69. His funeral was televised live in Baltimore and a standing-room-only crowd of 2,500 filled the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen, where a small plane flew overhead trailing a banner that read: "Unitas We Stand."

Even Unitas, a man of few words and little sentiment, would have been moved by the eulogy delivered by his former teammate Berry: "You elevated all of us to unreachable levels, whether we were in the stands or on the field. You made the impossible possible. Those images of your performances still have not faded."

Nor will they fade anytime soon. Such is the legacy of Johnny U.

Ray Didinger is a football analyst for Comcast Sportsnet in Philadelphia. He also writes a column for CSNPhilly.com.

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GAMES ON

From a thrilling "Kickoff Weekend" to what promises to be a gripping conclusion, the 2011 NFL season has taken us on quite a ride. Relive the biggest moments:

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(Clockwise from top left):
**Ravens free safety Ed Reed;
Patriots tight end Aaron Hernandez;
49ers wide receiver Michael Crabtree;
and Giants wide receiver Victor Cruz.**

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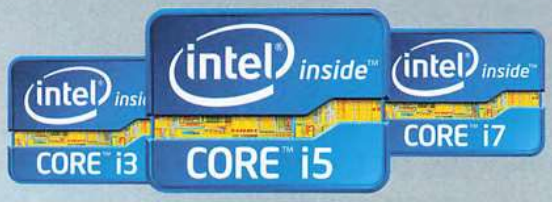

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Week 1: BACK TO FOOTBALL

SEPTEMBER 8
PACKERS 42.....Saints 34
SEPTEMBER 11
RAVENS 35.....Steelers 7
BEARS 30.....Falcons 12
Bengals 27.....BROWNS 17
TEXANS 34.....Colts 7
JAGUARS 16.....Titans 14
Bills 41.....CHIEFS 7
Eagles 31.....RAMS 13
Lions 27.....BUCCANEERS 20
CARDINALS 28.....Panthers 21
CHARGERS 24.....Vikings 17
49ERS 33.....Seahawks 17
REDSKINS 28.....Giants 14
JETS 27.....Cowboys 24
SEPTEMBER 12
Patriots 38.....DOLPHINS 24
Raiders 23.....BRONCOS 20

The NFL's 92nd season began in Green Bay, where the defending Super Bowl champs opened a Kickoff Weekend that provided fans with record-breaking performances, classic comebacks, and moving tributes in memory of 9/11.

After a Lambeau Field pregame show with performances by Kid Rock, Lady Antebellum, and Maroon 5—as well as a touching presentation featuring alumni from all 32 NFL teams—the Packers went to work, streaking past the Saints, 42-34, in a high-paced thriller.

Aaron Rodgers threw three TD passes before the first quarter was over, one of those to rookie Randall Cobb, who later tied an NFL mark by returning a kickoff 108 yards for a score.

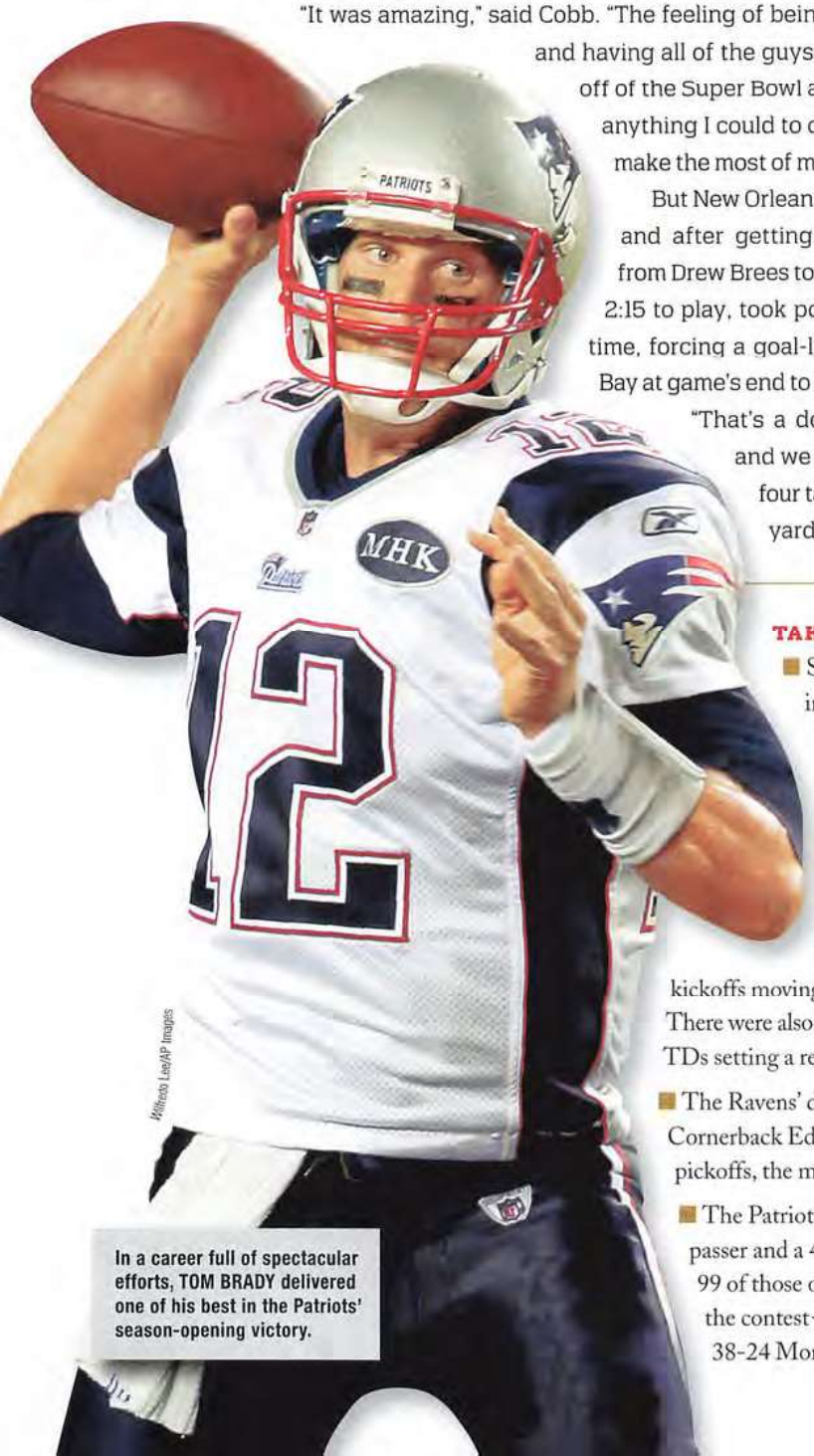
"It was amazing," said Cobb. "The feeling of being in Lambeau Field and having all of the guys around me coming off of the Super Bowl and just trying to do anything I could to contribute. I tried to make the most of my opportunities."

But New Orleans kept coming back, and after getting a 5-yard TD pass from Drew Brees to Jimmy Graham with 2:15 to play, took possession one more time, forcing a goal-line stand by Green Bay at game's end to ensure the victory.

"That's a do-or-die play there, and we got off the field," said linebacker Clay Matthews, who was in on four tackles on the night, including the final stop. "We gave up too many yards, too many points, but we made the plays when they counted."

David Drapkin/AP Images

▲ **Back and possibly even better, the Super Bowl XLV champion PACKERS looked sharp against the Saints.**

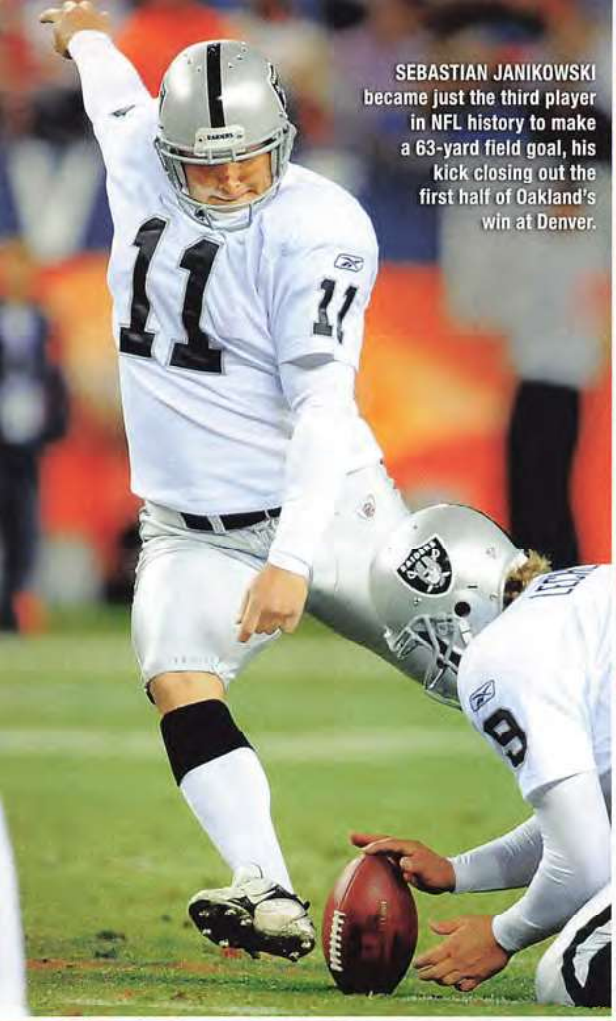


Wilfredo Lee/AP Images

In a career full of spectacular efforts, TOM BRADY delivered one of his best in the Patriots' season-opening victory.

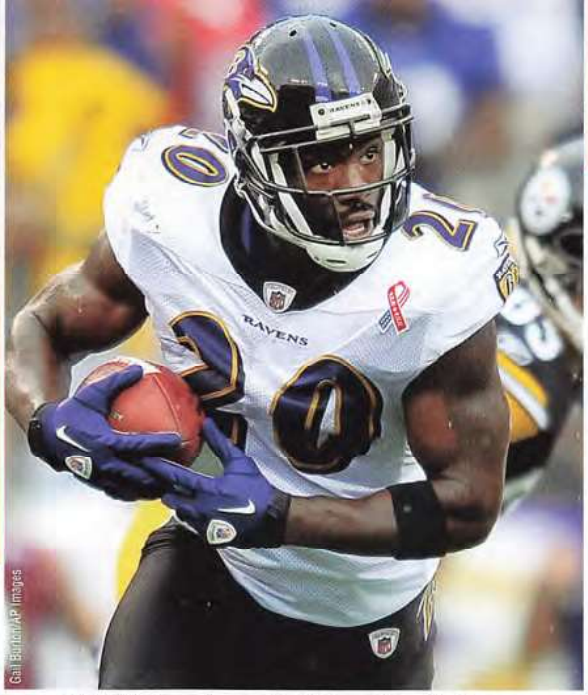
TAKING A TRIP AROUND OPENING WEEKEND

- Sept. 11 remembrances were held at all games played that day, including MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, N.J., where former President George W. Bush participated in the pregame coin toss. The NFL and the NFLPA combined to contribute $1 million to three memorials and two charities established in response to the attacks on America, including $500,000 given to the 9/11 Museum & Memorial in Lower Manhattan.
- Predictions that rule changes would diminish the opportunity for big kickoff returns appeared overblown, at least for one week. Despite kickoffs moving up five yards to the 35-yard line, three were run back for touchdowns. There were also five punts brought back for scores, with the eight combined kick-return TDs setting a record for a single week.
- The Ravens' defense forced seven turnovers in a 35-7 victory over the Steelers. Cornerback Ed Reed contributed two interceptions, his 12th game with multiple pickoffs, the most by any player whose career began in the Super Bowl era.
- The Patriots-Dolphins game was the first in NFL history to have a 500-yard passer and a 400-yard passer. New England's Tom Brady threw for 517 yards—99 of those on a fourth-quarter touchdown pass to Wes Welker that broke open the contest—and the Dolphins' Chad Henne accounted for 416 in the Patriots' 38-24 Monday night triumph.



SEBASTIAN JANIKOWSKI became just the third player in NFL history to make a 63-yard field goal, his kick closing out the first half of Oakland's win at Denver.

Ron Chenoy/US Presswire



Gail Burton/AP Images

▲ With ED REED snaring a pair of interceptions, the Ravens kept their AFC North rival Steelers on the defensive all day.

CEDRIC BENSON secured the Bengals' victory at Cleveland with a 39-yard TD run.

Mark Duncan/AP Images

■ Colts QB Peyton Manning missed his team's opener against Houston, ending his streak of consecutive starts at 227 (including playoffs). And the Texans took full advantage, keeping Indianapolis off the scoreboard until midway through the fourth quarter while cruising to a 34-7 win.

■ For the first time in their history, the Cowboys lost a game they led by 14 or more points in the fourth quarter. Dallas had been 246-0-1 in such contests, and was in front of the Jets, 24-10, after Felix Jones' 1-yard touchdown run with 14:50 remaining. But New York rallied with a 26-yard TD pass from Mark Sanchez to Plaxico Burress, an 18-yard return of a blocked punt by Isaiah Trufant that tied the game, and won it when Nick Folk hit a 50-yard field goal with 27 seconds remaining.

■ With 107.4 million fans tuned in, the 2011 Kickoff Weekend became the NFL's most-viewed opening weekend ever. The Saints-Packers, Giants-Redskins, and Cowboys-Jets games were the three most-watched sporting events since Super Bowl XLV.

Week 1: PLAYER AWARDS

OFFENSE
Tom Brady *QB, Patriots*
Posted a 121.6 passer rating while throwing for 517 yards, a franchise record and the fifth-most in NFL history, and topped 35,000 career passing yards during win at Miami.

DEFENSE
Terrell Suggs *LB, Ravens*
Equaled a career-high with three sacks and also forced two fumbles – part of franchise's record-breaking seven takeaways – in victory over Pittsburgh.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Sebastian Janikowski *K, Raiders*
Tied an NFL record with a 63-yard field goal and became first player in history with two career FGs of at least 60 yards to help beat Denver.

OFFENSE
Aaron Rodgers *QB, Packers*
Completed 27 of 35 passes for 312 yards and three TDs, earning a 132.1 passer rating while leading Packers past New Orleans.

DEFENSE
Brian Urlacher *LB, Bears*
Returned a fumble 12 yards for a TD, added an interception, and had 10 tackles – contributing to a unit that didn't allow an offensive touchdown – in win over Atlanta.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Ted Ginn Jr. *KR-PR, 49ers*
In a span of just 59 seconds of the fourth quarter, returned both a kickoff (102 yards) and a punt (55 yards) for touchdowns to help team pull away from Seattle.

PEPSI NFL ROOKIE
Randall Cobb *WR-KR, Packers*
Tied an NFL mark with a 108-yard kickoff return for a touchdown and added two catches, one a 32-yard TD, in triumph over Saints.

THE NFL REMEMBERS 9/11

Fans at FedEx Field were among the many who honored the heroes and those whose lives were lost.

Clint Owen/AP Images

Week 2: AN EASTERN ALERT

SEPTEMBER 18
BILLS 38.....Raiders 35
Packers 30.....PANTHERS 23
LIONS 48.....Chiefs 3
Browns 27.....COLTS 19
Buccaneers 24.....VIKINGS 20
SAINTS 30.....Bears 13
JETS 32.....Jaguars 3
STEELERS 24.....Seahawks 0
TITANS 26.....Ravens 13
REDSKINS 22.....Cardinals 21
Cowboys 27.....49ERS 24 (OT)
BRONCOS 24.....Bengals 22
Texans 23.....DOLPHINS 13
PATRIOTS 35.....Chargers 21
FALCONS 35.....Eagles 31
SEPTEMBER 19
GIANTS 28.....Rams 16

Of the seven teams that improved to 2-0, three of them resided in the AFC East. The Patriots and Jets, both 2010 playoff qualifiers, were joined by the surprising Bills.

Buffalo climbed out of a 21-3 halftime hole against the Raiders by scoring touchdowns on five straight second-half possessions, taking their first lead on Fred Jackson's 1-yard run less than a minute into the fourth quarter. The game went back and forth from there, with Oakland ahead by four until Ryan Fitzpatrick put the finishing touches on an 80-yard drive by tossing a 6-yard scoring pass to David Nelson in the closing seconds.

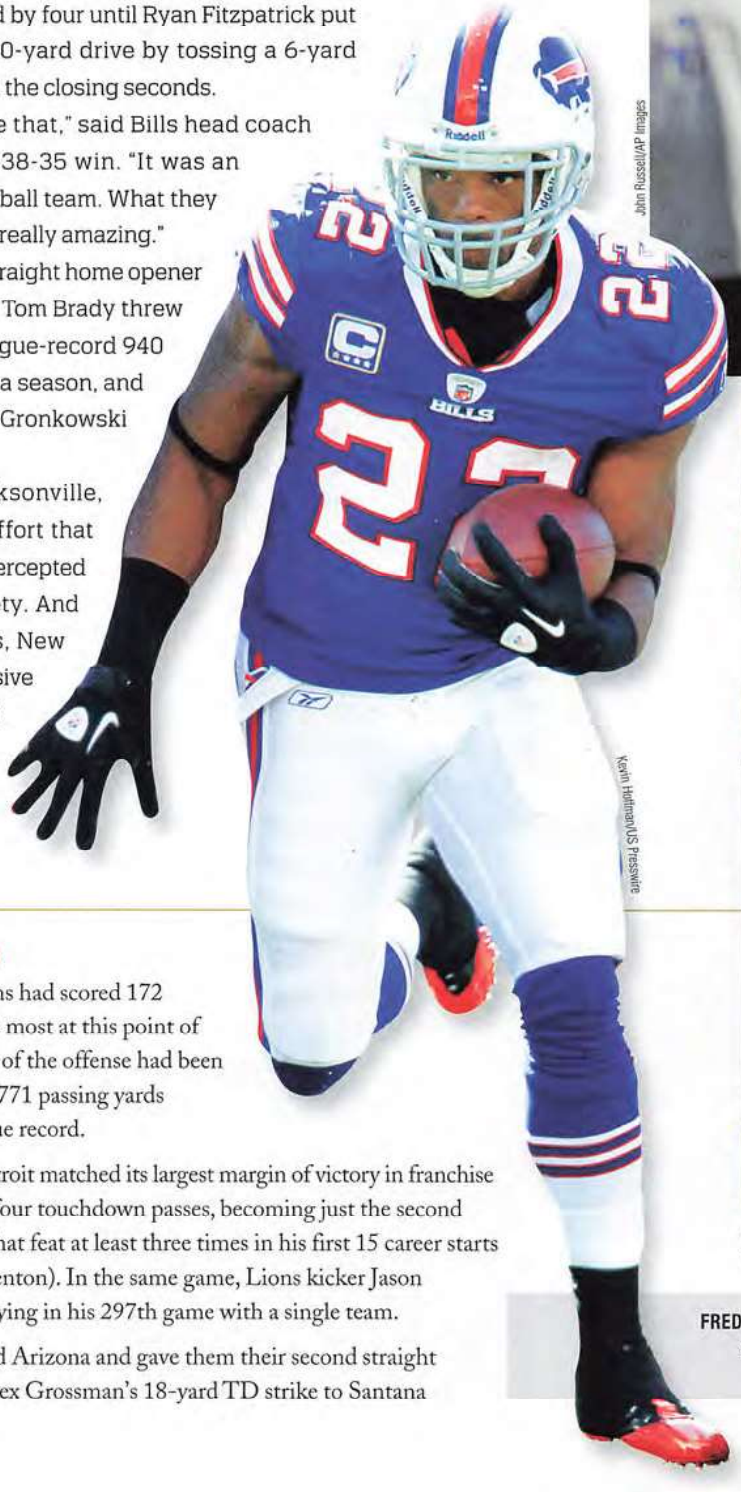
"I can't recall one quite like that," said Bills head coach Chan Gailey after his team's 38-35 win. "It was an amazing gut-check by our football team. What they did coming out of halftime was really amazing."

New England won its 10th straight home opener by defeating San Diego, 35-21. Tom Brady threw for 423 yards, giving him a league-record 940 through the first two weeks of a season, and connected with tight end Rob Gronkowski on TDs of 10 and 17 yards.

The Jets coasted past Jacksonville, 32-3, carried by a defensive effort that allowed just 203 total yards, intercepted four passes, and forced a safety. And for the first time in 17 outings, New York tallied a first-quarter offensive touchdown, reaching the end zone less than five minutes into the game when Mark Sanchez fired a 17-yard pass to Santonio Holmes.

The Titans triumphed in their home opener behind the arm of MATT HASSELBECK, who piled up 358 passing yards against Baltimore.

John Russell/AP Images



Kevin Hoffman/US Presswire

FRED JACKSON (117 rushing yards, 2 TDs) and the Bills found their stride in the second half to overcome Oakland.

Rick Osentoski/AP Images

▲ At 2-0, head coach JIM SCHWARTZ and the Lions had a spring in their step.

TALLYING UP WEEK TWO

■ Through two weeks, NFL teams had scored 172 touchdowns and 1,502 points, the most at this point of any NFL season in history. Much of the offense had been generated through the air; the 15,771 passing yards through two weeks also set a league record.

■ In beating the Chiefs, 48-3, Detroit matched its largest margin of victory in franchise history. Matthew Stafford threw four touchdown passes, becoming just the second NFL quarterback to accomplish that feat at least three times in his first 15 career starts (joining Hall of Famer Fran Tarkenton). In the same game, Lions kicker Jason Hanson set an NFL record by playing in his 297th game with a single team.

■ The Redskins' late surge topped Arizona and gave them their second straight win. They pulled within two on Rex Grossman's 18-yard TD strike to Santana

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REFERENCES: 1. Mayers LB, Rundell KW. Exercise-induced asthma. Written for the American College of Sports Medicine. **2.** US Census Bureau. US PopClock Projection. www.census.gov/population/www/popclockus.html. Accessed October 19, 2011. **3.** Sinha T, David AK. Recognition and management of exercise-induced bronchospasm. *Am Fam Physician.* 2003;67(4):769-774. **4.** Kukafka DS, Lang DM, Porter S, et al. Exercise-induced bronchospasm in high school athletes via a free running test. *Chest.* 1998;114(6):1613-1622.

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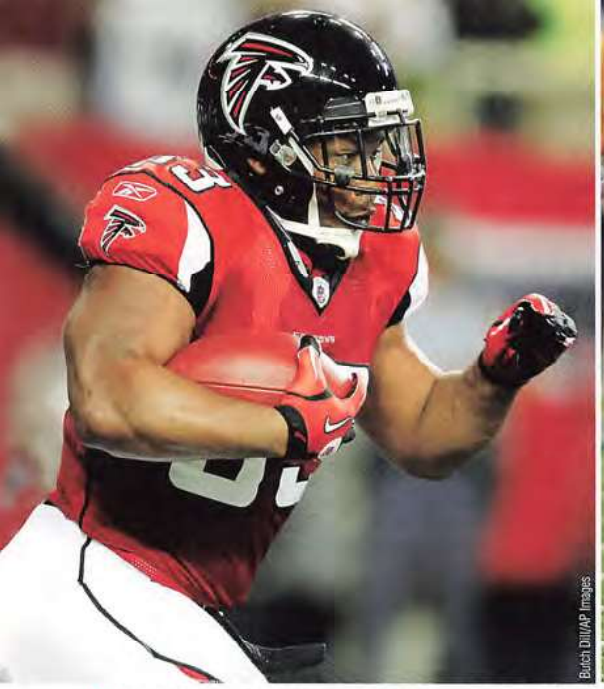

Butch Dill/AP Images

▲ **MICHAEL TURNER carried the Falcons over the finish line, rushing for a game-winning 3-yard TD against the Eagles.**

Anthony Gruppuso/US Presswire

▲ **The Jets took the air out of Jacksonville, with ANTONIO CROMARTIE collecting two of the team's four interceptions.**

Moss with less than six minutes to play, then secured the 22-21 decision when Graham Gano made a 34-yard field goal with 1:45 remaining.

■ Panthers QB Cam Newton continued his impressive start, throwing for an NFL single-game rookie record 432 yards in a 30-23 setback to the Packers. However, he also was intercepted three times, twice by 1997 Heisman Trophy winner Charles Woodson. The Green Bay cornerback is the only player to win that award and intercept a fellow Heisman recipient in an NFL game, adding Newton to a list that already included Matt Leinart, Carson Palmer, and Vinny Testaverde.

■ Ben Tate rushed for 103 yards and Matt Schaub hit Andre Johnson for seven of his 21 completions, including a 23-yard fourth-quarter touchdown that clinched the Texans' 23-13 victory over Miami and improved Houston to 2-0.

■ LeGarrette Blount's 4-yard scoring run with 31 seconds to play completed Tampa Bay's comeback from a 17-point halftime deficit for a 24-20 victory at Minnesota. For the Vikings, running back Adrian Peterson scored twice, giving him 54 career rushing touchdowns to surpass Chuck Foreman and Bill Brown for the most in franchise history.

■ Pittsburgh posted the season's first shutout, limiting the Seahawks to eight first downs and 164 total yards in a 24-0 blanking. Ben Roethlisberger threw two touchdown passes in the win.

▼ **Aided by a pair of ERIC DECKER touchdown catches, the Broncos knocked back a challenge from Cincinnati.**

Ron Chenoy/US Presswire

A RALLY OF THEIR OWN

One week after seeing a late 14-point lead slip away, the Cowboys were the ones coming back. They trailed the 49ers, 24-14, in the fourth quarter before getting a Tony Romo (right) touchdown pass to Miles Austin and Dan Bailey's 48-yard field goal as time expired in regulation. Romo, sidelined for part of the game with an injury before returning late in the third quarter, then hit Jesse Holley on a 77-yard completion early in overtime to set up Bailey's game-winning kick from 19 yards. The Dallas QB, who vowed to play his "best game" following the team's opening-day loss, finished 20-of-33 for 345 yards. Cowboys coach Jason Garrett said of Romo, "It's about a quarterback, but it's really about a football player and a competitor. And Tony is one of the best competitors I've ever been around."

Marcio Jose Sanchez/AP Images

Week 2: PLAYER AWARDS

AFC

OFFENSE
Tom Brady *QB, Patriots*
Threw for 437 yards and three TDs against Chargers to win his 29th consecutive regular-season home game—an NFL record.

DEFENSE
Antonio Cromartie *CB, Jets*
Helped keep Jaguars out of the end zone with three tackles and two interceptions, his fifth career game with multiple pickoffs.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Joshua Cribbs *KR-WR, Browns*
Had a 52-yard kickoff return and a 43-yard punt return, both plays setting up TDs in victory over Colts.

NFC

OFFENSE
Tony Romo *QB, Cowboys*
Totaled 345 passing yards with two touchdowns, extending his club record streak of consecutive games with a TD pass to 20 in overtime win at San Francisco.

DEFENSE
Roman Harper *S, Saints*
Had seven tackles, two sacks, and a forced fumble as part of a massive defensive effort vs. Chicago that allowed just 246 total yards.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Jason Hanson *K, Lions*
On a milestone day that saw him set a league mark for most games with one team (297), made a 51-yard field goal and became seventh NFL player to reach 1,900 career points.

PEPSI NFL ROOKIE
Denarius Moore *WR, Raiders*
Hauled in five passes for 146 yards, including a 50-yard TD grab, and rushed for 25 yards against Bills.

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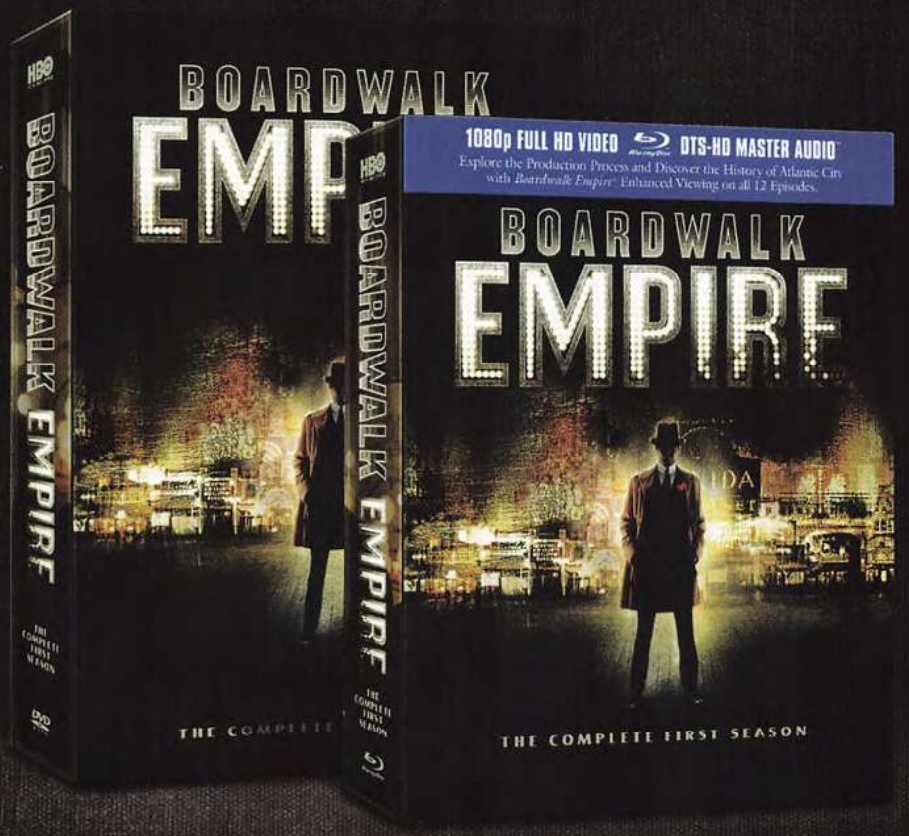
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Week 3: BEGINNING TO ROAR

SEPTEMBER 25
BILLS 34.....Patriots 31
PANTHERS 16.....Jaguars 10
49ers 13.....BENGALS 8

BROWNS 17.....Dolphins 16
Lions 26.....VIKINGS 23 (OT)
SAINTS 40.....Texans 33
Giants 29.....EAGLES 16

TITANS 17.....Broncos 14
RAIDERS 34.....Jets 24
Ravens 37.....RAMS 7
CHARGERS 20.....Chiefs 17

Packers 27.....BEARS 17
SEAHAWKS 13.....Cardinals 10
BUCCANEERS 16.....Falcons 13
Steelers 23.....COLTS 20

SEPTEMBER 26
COWBOYS 18.....Redskins 16

After years of lying dormant, the Lions continued to show signs of life, improving to 3-0 for the first time since 1980 and keeping pace in the NFC North with the defending champion Packers.

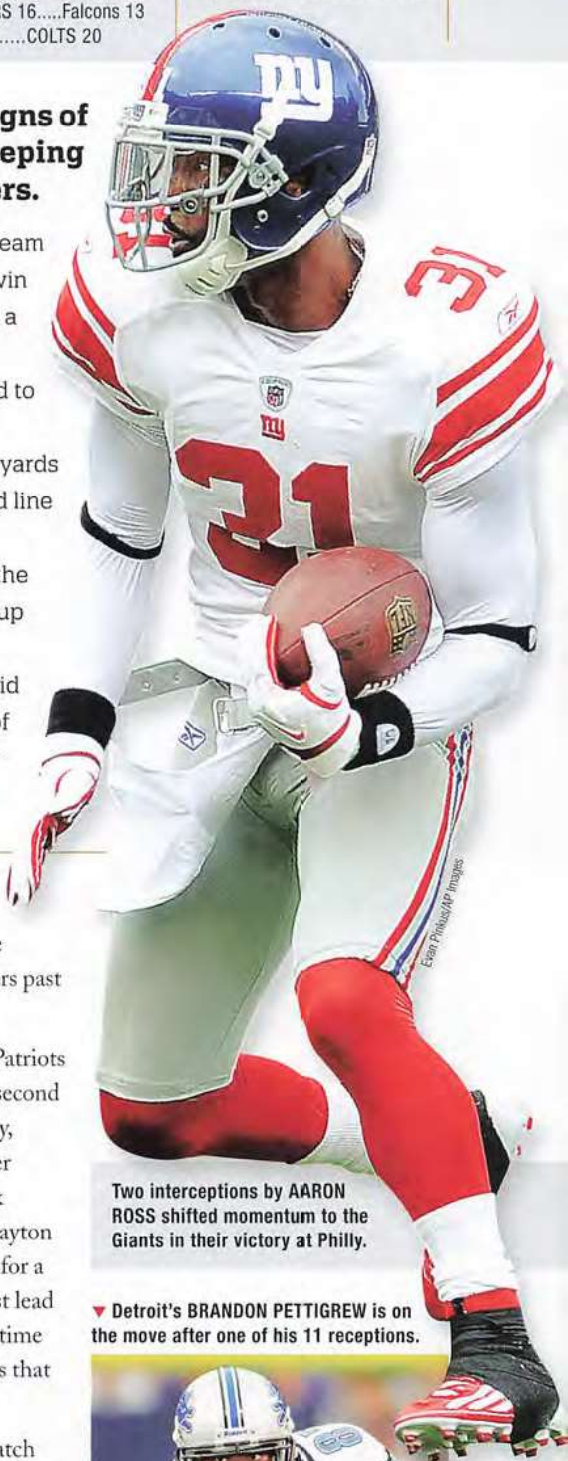
The situation looked dire at halftime, with Detroit trailing the host Vikings, 20-0. But the team rallied behind quarterback Matthew Stafford (32 of 46, 378 yards), who connected with Calvin Johnson for a pair of touchdowns, and kicker Jason Hanson, whose four field goals included a 50-yarder and the overtime game-winner from 32 yards out.

"It was as tough a win as I've been part of," said Lions head coach Jim Schwartz. "We had to overcome a lot of adversity. It's tough to be down 20 at the half."

Aiding the comeback was a defense that limited the Vikings' Adrian Peterson to just five yards rushing in the second half. The defense also got a key fourth-and-1 stop at its own 17-yard line midway through the final quarter that kept it a three-point game.

On the first possession of overtime, Stafford fired a pair of completions to Johnson, the second of those a 40-yarder that brought the ball deep into Minnesota territory and set up Hanson's kick that produced the 26-23 victory.

"[Stafford] is so calm and collected, and that attitude goes over the whole huddle," said Johnson, who became the first player in NFL history with two touchdown catches in each of his team's first three games of a season. "He's our coach on the field. He's a great leader for us and makes big plays."



Evan Pinkus/AP Images

Two interceptions by AARON ROSS shifted momentum to the Giants in their victory at Philly.

CHEERS FOR A WILD WEEK THREE

■ In a rematch of the previous season's NFC Championship Game, Jermichael Finley caught three touchdown passes from Aaron Rodgers—from 6, 7, and 10 yards—to power the undefeated Packers past Chicago, 27-17. Strong safety Morgan Burnett grabbed a pair of interceptions for the winners.

Mark Duncan/AP Images

▲ When the game was on the line, COLT McCOY was at his finest, directing the Browns to a game-winning TD vs. Miami.

■ The Bills found themselves trailing the Patriots by three touchdowns midway through the second quarter but charged back for a 34-31 victory, remaining unbeaten with their first win over New England since 2003. Ryan Fitzpatrick threw for 369 yards and two scores, and Drayton Florence returned an interception 27 yards for a fourth-quarter TD that gave Buffalo its first lead of the game. The triumph marked the first time an NFL team had won back-to-back games that it had trailed by at least 18 points.

■ Larry Fitzgerald's 12-yard touchdown catch gave him the Cardinals franchise record (67), but the Seahawks prevailed, 13-10, when QB Tarvaris Jackson scampered 11 yards for a score midway through the fourth quarter.

■ The Raiders tallied two touchdowns in a 42-second span at the end of the third quarter and start of the fourth to overtake the Jets, 34-24, handing New York its first loss. Denarius Moore weaved his way 23 yards on a reverse for

▼ Detroit's BRANDON PETTIGREW is on the move after one of his 11 receptions.

Bruce Kluckhohn/US Presswire

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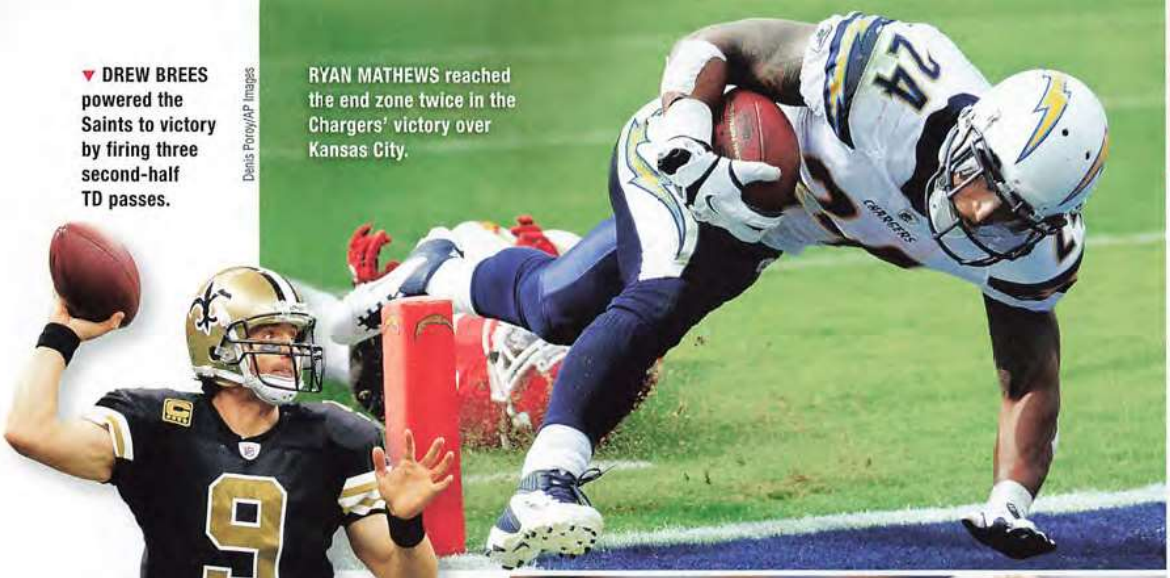


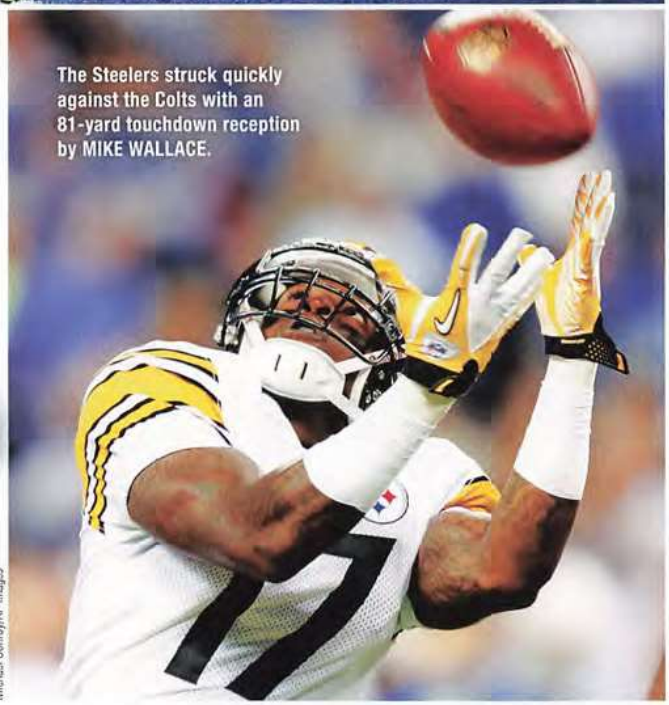
▼ DREW BREES powered the Saints to victory by firing three second-half TD passes.

Denis Poroy/AP Images

RYAN MATHEWS reached the end zone twice in the Chargers' victory over Kansas City.

Bill Haber/AP Images

the go-ahead TD, and after Taiwan Jones recovered a fumble on the ensuing kickoff, Michael Bush plowed over the goal line from a yard out. For the Jets, LaDainian Tomlinson had an 18-yard scoring catch, making him one of just three players in NFL history with 160 career touchdowns.



The Steelers struck quickly against the Colts with an 81-yard touchdown reception by MIKE WALLACE.

Michael Conroy/AP Images

■ There were five second-half lead changes in the game between the Saints and Texans, with Mark Ingram's 13-yard TD run with 2:42 to play the difference in New Orleans' 40-33 win. QBs Matt Schaub (373 yards) and Drew Brees (370) added to the league's list of 300-yard passing games, which totaled a record 33 through three weeks of the season.

■ Cleveland, Tennessee, Pittsburgh, and San Francisco all scored late to earn wins. For the Browns, Colt McCoy hit Mohamed Massaquoi on a 14-yard TD pass with 43 seconds left to earn a 17-16 victory over Miami. Matt Hasselbeck, celebrating his 36th birthday, put the Titans ahead to stay with a 4-yard scoring toss to Daniel Graham with 4:24 left in a 17-14 defeat of Denver. Ben Roethlisberger (25 of 37, 364 yards, 1 TD) drove the Steelers into position for Shaun Suisham's tie-breaking 38-yard field goal with just four seconds on the clock in a 23-20 win at Indianapolis. Finally, Kendall Hunter's 7-yard touchdown run with 3:59 remaining lifted the 49ers over the Bengals, 13-8.

■ Eli Manning fired four touchdown passes, highlighted by 74- and 28-yard throws to Victor Cruz, to pace the Giants' 29-16 win at Philadelphia. After the Eagles had battled back from an early two-TD deficit, New York regained the lead for good when Cruz beat a double team to make a grab at the goal line with 8:07 remaining.

Week 3: PLAYER AWARDS

AFC

OFFENSE
Darren McFadden *RB, Raiders*
Gained a Week 3-best 171 yards on 19 attempts – averaging 9.0 yards per carry – and scored two touchdowns, on runs of 2 and 70 yards, in win over Jets.

DEFENSE
Ray Lewis *LB, Ravens*
Won award for eighth time in career after making 10 tackles and adding a sack and forced fumble on one play that was returned for a TD during victory at St. Louis.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Rian Lindell *K, Bills*
Made all four PATs and two field goals, including 12th game-winning field goal of career, a 27-yarder as time expired to defeat Patriots.

NFC

OFFENSE
Eli Manning *QB, Giants*
Posted a 145.7 passer rating while completing 16 of 23 passes for 254 yards and four touchdowns, two of those in the fourth quarter to rally team to first win over Eagles in last seven meetings.

DEFENSE
Ronde Barber *CB, Buccaneers*
While making 186th consecutive start, gave a stellar overall effort in victory over Atlanta, contributing an interception, fumble recovery, four tackles, and three passes defensed.

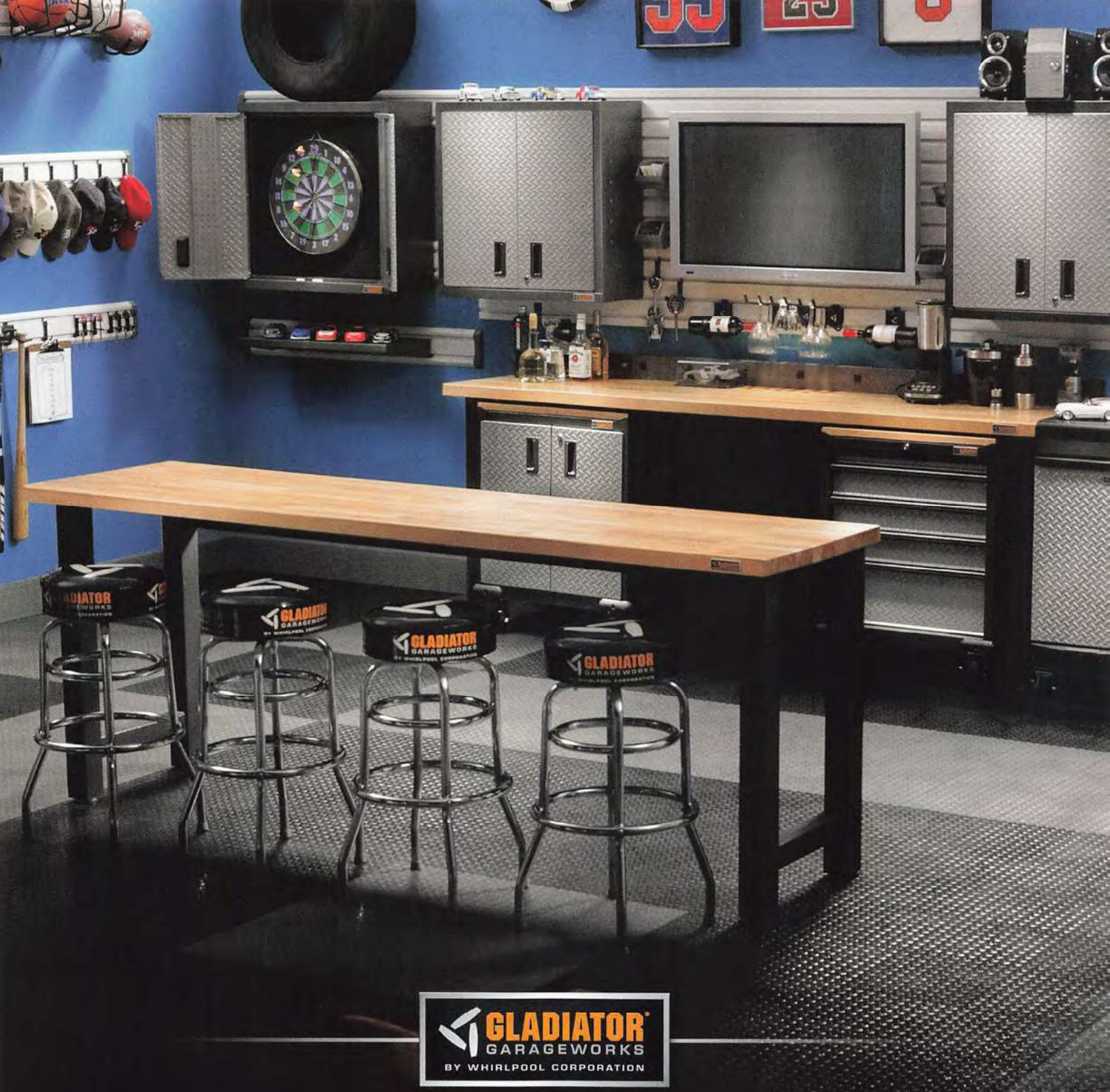
SPECIAL TEAMS
Dan Bailey K, *Cowboys*
Scored all 18 of his team's points by going six-of-six on field goal attempts, including game-winning 40-yarder to overcome Washington.

PEPSI NFL ROOKIE
Stefen Wisniewski G, *Raiders*
Part of an offensive line that opened holes for 234 rushing yards while allowing just one sack against highly touted Jets defense.

TEACHING THE RAIDER WAY

"Let your players make plays. That's what I'm trying to create here. I'm going to create an environment where our great players can do something special."
–Oakland head coach Hue Jackson, after his team rallied to defeat the Jets

Kelley L. Cox/US Presswire



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sears

Week 4: NO DEFICIT TOO BIG

OCTOBER 2
BEARS 34.....Panthers 29
BENGALS 23.....Bills 20
Titans 31.....BROWNS 13
Lions 34.....COWBOYS 30
TEXANS 17.....Steelers 10
Saints 23.....JAGUARS 10
CHIEFS 22.....Vikings 17
49ers 24.....EAGLES 23
Redskins 17.....RAMS 10
Giants 31.....CARDINALS 27
Falcons 30.....SEAHAWKS 28
PACKERS 49.....Broncos 23
Patriots 31.....RAIDERS 19
CHARGERS 26.....Dolphins 16
RAVENS 34.....Jets 17

OCTOBER 3
BUCCANEERS 24.....Colts 17

Continuing an early-season trend, four more teams that faced double-digit deficits walked off the field as winners. The 49ers and Lions provided the most unlikely comebacks.

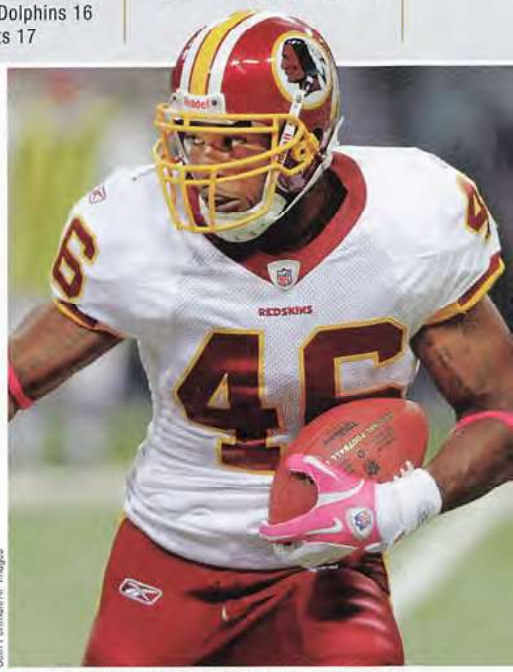
Green Bay moved to 4-0 by beating Denver, thanks to AARON RODGERS' 408-yard passing day.

Jim Prisching/AP Images

San Francisco found itself in a 23-3 third-quarter hole against Philadelphia, but rallied when Alex Smith threw scoring passes to Josh Morgan and Vernon Davis, then completed the 24-23 victory when Frank Gore reached the end zone on a 12-yard run. "That's as good a win as I can ever remember being part of," said first-year 49ers coach Jim Harbaugh. "I'm really proud of our players. They never flinched in a tough environment here. We kept fighting, made adjustments—[it was] a great team victory for us."

Detroit was in even bigger trouble after Tony Romo's touchdown pass to Jason Witten put the Cowboys ahead, 27-3. But the Lions were far from finished, slicing into the margin when Bobby Carpenter and Chris Houston ran interceptions back for touchdowns before the third quarter was complete. Over the final 15 minutes, Jason Hanson's 51-yard field goal was sandwiched between two Matthew Stafford-to-Calvin Johnson touchdown passes, the second of which provided for the 34-30 win.

The wins improved the 49ers to 3-1 and the Lions—who became the first NFL team to win back-to-back games after trailing both by at least 20 points—to 4-0.



Seth Perlman/AP Images

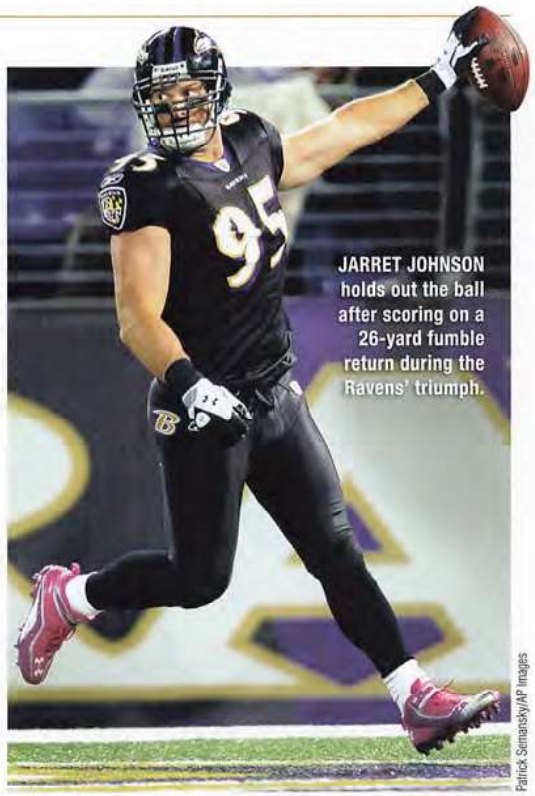
▲ The running of RYAN TORAIN (135 yards, 1 TD) carried Washington to victory over the Rams.

FINE POINTS FROM WEEK 4

■ The Giants were saddled with a late 10-point deficit at Arizona but came away with a 31-27 victory when Eli Manning threw touchdowns to Jake Ballard and Hakeem Nicks less than a minute apart. Manning completed seven of eight passes for 128 yards on the two drives, finishing the game with 321 yards passing.

■ Cincinnati trailed Buffalo, 17-3, at halftime, but crept closer on Mike Nugent's 21-yard field goal and Andy Dalton's 17-yard TD pass to Jermaine Gresham. After a Bills field goal, Dalton ran 3 yards for the game-tying score and Nugent hit a 43-yard field goal as time expired for the 23-20 win. The 14-point comeback marked the Bengals' biggest in seven seasons.

■ On a day when Packers teammate Aaron Rodgers grabbed most of the headlines, cornerback Charles Woodson grabbed an interception that moved him closer to a league record. He put Green Bay ahead, 14-3, when he picked off the Broncos' Kyle Orton



JARRET JOHNSON holds out the ball after scoring on a 26-yard fumble return during the Ravens' triumph.

Patrick Semansky/AP Images

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Breathability
Breathes nearly 50% better than cotton

Precision Fit
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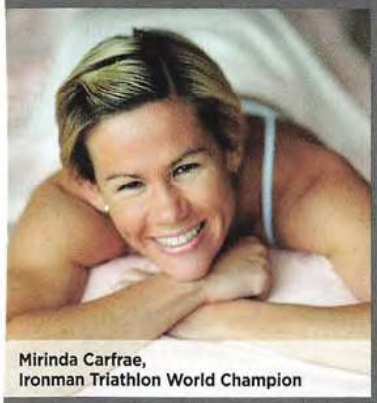
Durability
Advanced fade, wrinkle and shrink resistance

NATIONAL SLEEP FOUNDATION

Michelle Marciniak, SHEEX Co-Founder
Former WNBA Point Guard
National Champion MVP, Tennessee

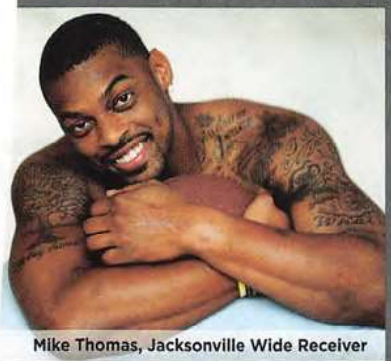
Ben Tate, Houston Running Back

Diana D'Alessio, Pro Golfer



Mirinda Carfrae,
Ironman Triathlon World Champion

Steve Smith, Philadelphia All-Pro Wide Receiver



Mike Thomas, Jacksonville Wide Receiver

Becky Morgan, Pro Golfer

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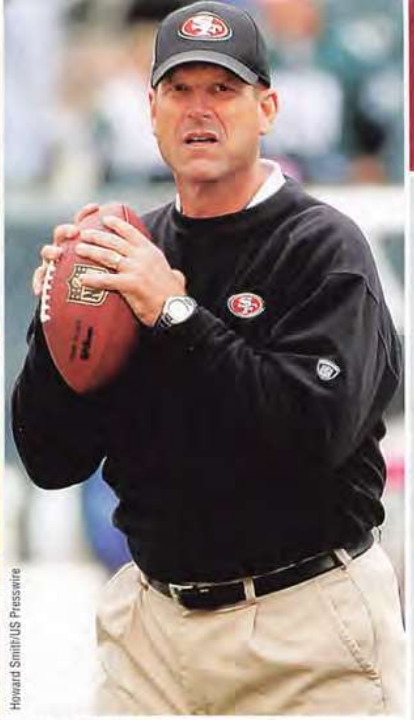
Cary Edmondson/US Presswire

▲ **The catches kept coming for New England's WES WELKER, who had nine receptions for 158 yards against the Raiders, including a 15-yard touchdown.**



Howard Smith/US Presswire

▲ **JIM HARBAUGH watched his 49ers come through in the clutch against the Eagles.**

and raced 30 yards for a score—the 11th time in his career that he's brought back an interception for a touchdown. Woodson drew even with Darren Sharper for second place all time and pulled within one of the NFL mark held by Rod Woodson.

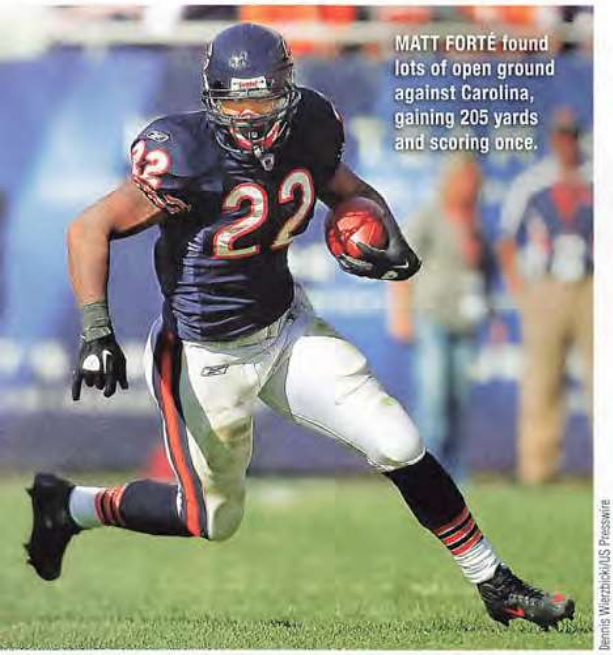
■ Matt Forté rushed for 205 yards in Chicago's 34-29 victory over Carolina, placing him in the company of Hall of Famers Walter Payton and Gale Sayers as the only players in Bears history to run for at least 200 yards in a game.

■ Atlanta slipped past Seattle, 30-28, as Matt Ryan threw for 291 yards and Michael Turner scored a pair of rushing touchdowns. Ryan put the Falcons on the board early with a 1-yard TD pass to Tony Gonzalez, and Turner upped that lead with scoring runs of 1 and 21 yards. Still, it took Matt Bryant's third field goal of the game, a 42-yarder in the fourth quarter, to provide a needed cushion for Atlanta, which survived a late Seahawks touchdown and held on when Steven Hauschka came up short on a 61-yard field goal attempt.

■ Drew Brees threw for 351 yards and had his 24th straight game with at least 20 pass completions—a league record—sending the Saints to a 23-10 win at Jacksonville.

■ Houston kept the Steelers' defense on the field for nearly 11 straight minutes to start their game, driving 95 yards in 19 plays capped by Matt Schaub's 1-yard touchdown pass to Owen Daniels. With the contest tied in the fourth quarter, Arian Foster broke loose for a 42-yard scoring run, and the Texans sealed their 17-10 victory with Jason Allen's interception in the final minute.

■ There were an NFL-record five returns for TDs in the Ravens' 34-17 win over the Jets.



MATT FORTÉ found lots of open ground against Carolina, gaining 205 yards and scoring once.

Dennis Wierzbicki/US Presswire

Week 4: PLAYER AWARDS

OFFENSE
Arian Foster ***RB, Texans***
Led all AFC rushers with 155 yards, averaging 5.2 yards per carry, and scored game-winning TD against Steelers on a 42-yard run.

DEFENSE
Jarret Johnson ***LB, Ravens***
Keyed overwhelming defensive effort that limited Jets to 150 total yards, contributing a 26-yard fumble return for a TD, three tackles, and one pass defensed.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Ryan Succop ***K, Chiefs***
Totaled 16 points by making five field goals—including a career-long 54-yarder in the third quarter—and one PAT in victory over Vikings.

OFFENSE
Aaron Rodgers ***QB, Packers***
Became first player in NFL history to have 400 passing yards (408), four passing touchdowns, and two rushing TDs in a game, achieving feat in win over Broncos.

DEFENSE
Brian Orakpo ***LB, Redskins***
With five tackles and 2.5 sacks in triumph over Rams, was part of a defense that allowed just 172 yards, its best effort in four years.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Devin Hester PR-KR, ***Bears***
Set league record with 11th career punt-return touchdown, scoring on a 69-yarder in the second quarter of victory over Carolina.

PEPSI NFL ROOKIE
Cam Newton QB, ***Panthers***
Continued stellar rookie season by throwing for 374 yards and one TD, and also rushing for a pair of scores against Chicago.

THE POWER OF PINK

With the games of Oct. 2-3, the NFL kicked off its third-annual "A Crucial Catch" campaign in support of Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

As part of the effort, all games played in October would have: game balls with pink ribbon decals; pink equipment for players that included cleats, wristbands, gloves, sideline caps, and sideline towels; pink sideline caps for coaches and sideline personnel; pink ribbon pins for coaches and team executives; and pink goal post padding in end zones. Many of these items were then auctioned in an effort to raise more than $1 million for the American Cancer Society.

For the Ravens-Jets game, the city of Baltimore had City Hall and other areas lit up in pink, and country music star Martina McBride (right) sang the national anthem flanked by 50 breast cancer survivors.

Gail Burton/AP Images

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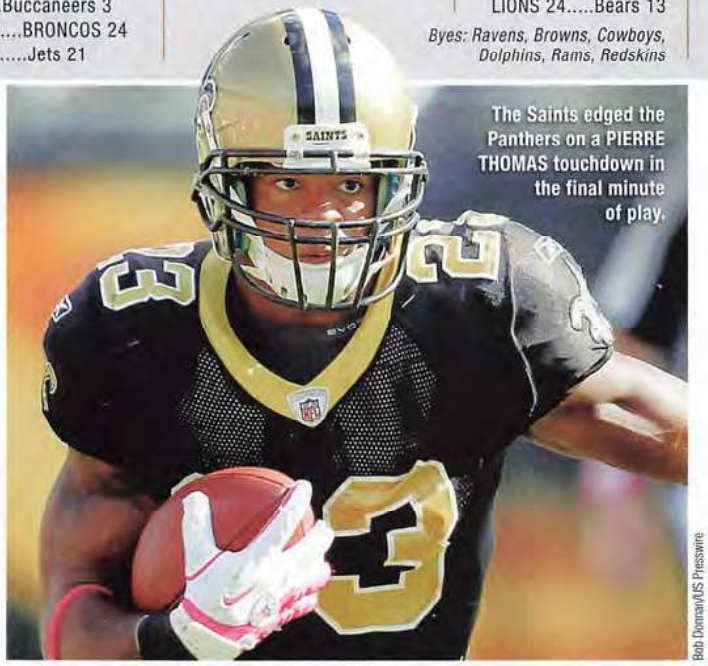
Week 5: A VICTORY MARCH

OCTOBER 9
BILLS 31.....Eagles 24
Saints 30.....PANTHERS 27
Raiders 25.....TEXANS 20
Chiefs 28.....COLTS 24
Bengals 30.....JAGUARS 20
VIKINGS 34.....Cardinals 10
Seahawks 36.....GIANTS 25
STEELERS 38.....Titans 17
49ERS 48.....Buccaneers 3
Chargers 29.....BRONCOS 24
PATRIOTS 30.....Jets 21
Packers 25.....FALCONS 14

OCTOBER 10
LIONS 24.....Bears 13

Byes: Ravens, Browns, Cowboys, Dolphins, Rams, Redskins

New Orleans started and finished with a flourish, and needed it all to keep the Panthers at bay, 30-27, to win its fourth straight game and take sole possession of the NFC South lead.



The Saints edged the Panthers on a PIERRE THOMAS touchdown in the final minute of play.

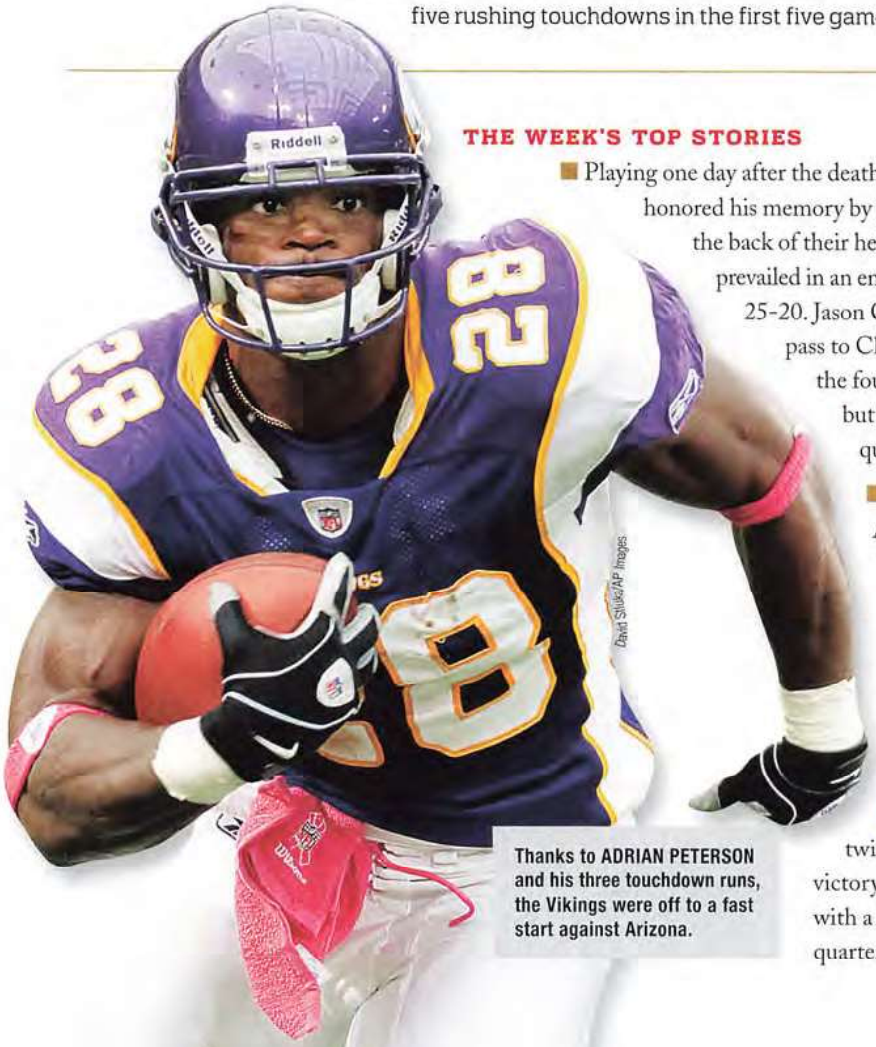
Bob Donnan/US Presswire

The Saints struck paydirt barely a minute into the game. Three plays after a Patrick Robinson interception deep in Carolina territory, Drew Brees tossed a 1-yard touchdown pass to Jed Collins. John Kasay then capped the team's next possession with a 23-yard field goal that made it 10-0.

Carolina, however, kept up the fight and moved ahead, 27-23, early in the fourth quarter when Cam Newton found Greg Olsen open for a 5-yard touchdown pass.

The score remained that way until the final minute. Brees marched his team 89 yards, completing 8 of 9 passes on the drive, the last of those a 6-yarder to Pierre Thomas for the winning points with 50 seconds remaining. "Calm, cool, collected," said Brees of the Saints' late rally. "We've been [in this situation] many times before. Nothing spectacular, but just methodical."

Both quarterbacks excelled. Brees finished with 359 passing yards and threw a touchdown pass for the 32nd consecutive game, the third-longest streak in NFL history. Newton, meanwhile, became the first player with at least five passing and five rushing touchdowns in the first five games of his career.



David Stluka/AP Images

Thanks to ADRIAN PETERSON and his three touchdown runs, the Vikings were off to a fast start against Arizona.

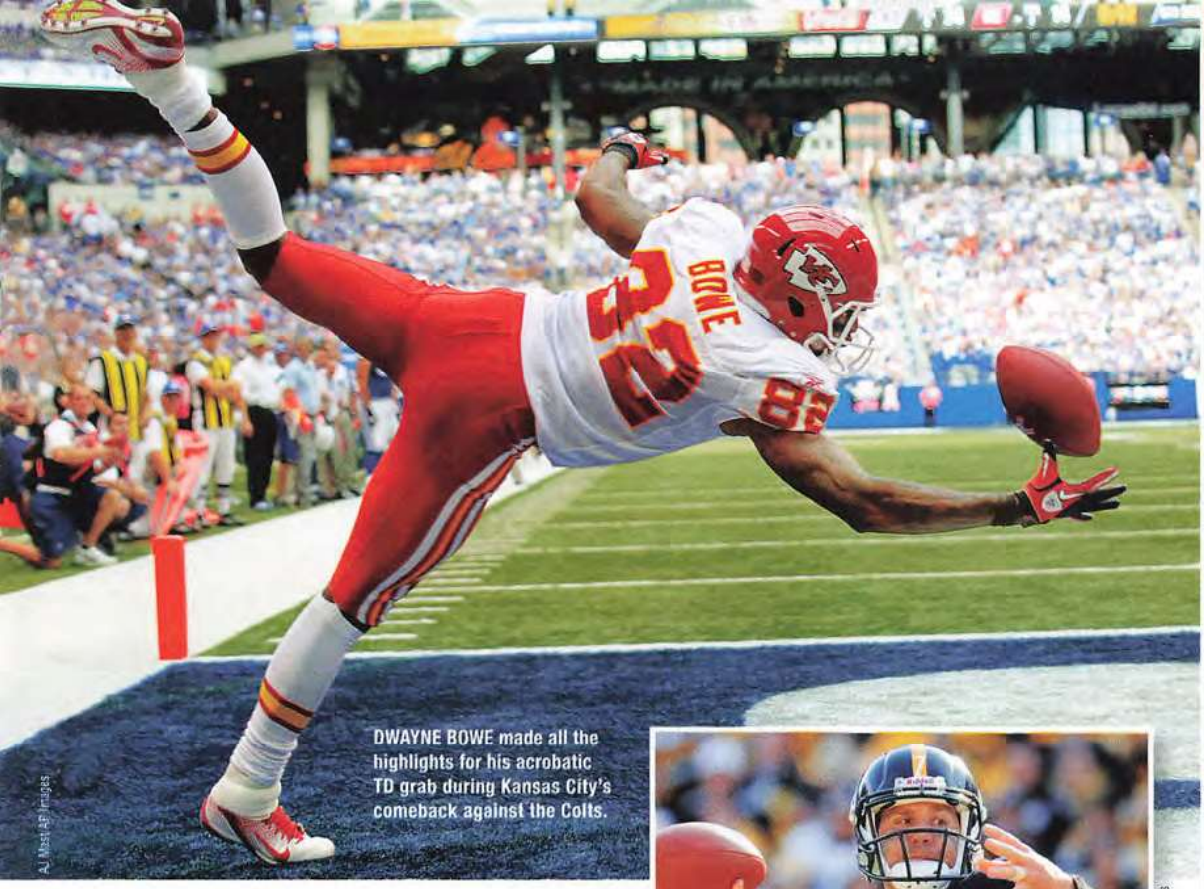
THE WEEK'S TOP STORIES

Troy Taormina/US Presswire

- Playing one day after the death of owner Al Davis, the Raiders honored his memory by placing a logo with his name on the back of their helmets (right). The team then prevailed in an emotional thriller against Houston, 25-20. Jason Campbell's 18-yard touchdown pass to Chaz Schilens on the second play of the fourth quarter put Oakland ahead to stay, but victory wasn't assured until Michael Huff intercepted Texans quarterback Matt Schaub in the end zone as time expired.

- Green Bay and Detroit remained unbeaten on the season. After yielding a pair of early touchdowns to the Falcons, the Packers bounced back, eventually taking the lead late in the third quarter on Aaron Rodgers' 70-yard scoring pass to James Jones and then pulling away for a 25-14 victory. On Monday night, Matthew Stafford (19 of 26, 219 yards) threw two TD passes and Jahvid Best raced 88 yards for another score in the Lions' 24-13 win over Chicago. Detroit's 5-0 start was its best in 55 years.

- BenJarvus Green-Ellis rushed for 136 yards and scored twice, and the Patriots led from start to finish in their 30-21 victory over the Jets. Green-Ellis put New England on the board with a 3-yard run midway through the first quarter, while his third-quarter touchdown gave New England a 24-14 lead.

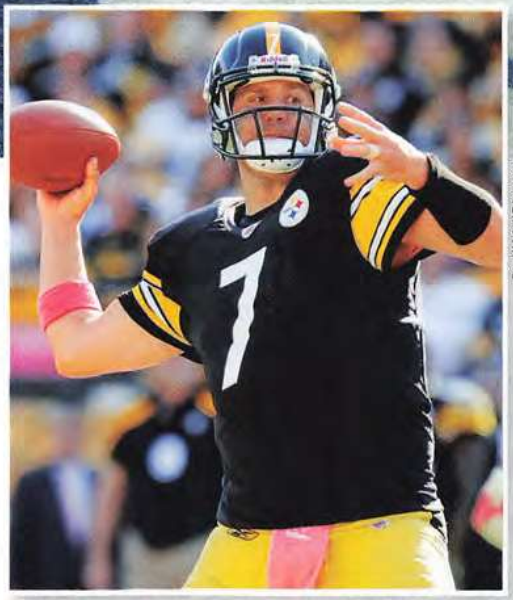


DWAYNE BOWE made all the highlights for his acrobatic TD grab during Kansas City's comeback against the Colts.

AJ Mast/AP Images

▼ NICK BARNETT (50) finishes off an interception return for a score while Bills teammate Danny Batten (57) celebrates.

Gary Wiepert/AP Images



Don Wright/AP Images

▲ The Steelers rode the big arm of BEN ROETHLISBERGER, who threw five touchdown passes to topple the Titans.

■ Ryan Mathews rushed for 125 yards and Nick Novak kicked five field goals, a 51-yarder among them, to lift San Diego over Denver, 29-24. Chargers QB Philip Rivers both rushed and threw for a TD in the win.

■ With a 48-3 win over visiting Tampa Bay, San Francisco (4-1) was off to its best start in nine years. Vernon Davis caught two TD passes from Alex Smith, while Frank Gore racked up 125 rushing yards.

■ Michael Vick became the NFL's all-time leader in rushing yards by a quarterback, his 90 against Buffalo giving him 4,948 for his career to surpass Randall Cunningham. The Bills, however, had more reason to celebrate, getting 196 yards from scrimmage from Fred Jackson and forcing five turnovers in their 31-24 victory over the Eagles.

■ By rallying past the Colts, 28-24, Kansas City matched its largest comeback in franchise history and became the seventh team on the season to win after trailing by 17 or more points. First, Matt Cassel's 16-yard TD pass to Steve Breaston cut Indy's lead to 24-14. Cassel then hit Dwayne Bowe for a third-quarter score and put his team in front by hitting Breaston from 11 yards out with 5:15 remaining.

Week 5: PLAYER AWARDS

OFFENSE
Ben Roethlisberger *QB, Steelers*
Matched club record by throwing five touchdown passes as part of a 24-of-34, 228-yard day in victory over Tennessee.

DEFENSE
George Wilson *S, Bills*
Intercepted a pass and added 11 tackles and three passes defensed in victory over Eagles.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Sebastian Janikowski *K, Raiders*
Kicked four field goals and equaled NFL record with three FGs of 50 or more yards in a game (54, 55, 50) to contribute in win over Houston.

OFFENSE
Adrian Peterson *RB, Vikings*
Became fifth player since 1970 to rush for three first-quarter TDs in a game and finished with 122 rushing yards to help defeat Arizona.

DEFENSE
Patrick Willis *LB, 49ers*
With 18 tackles and a fumble recovery, sparked a defense that forced three turnovers and kept Tampa Bay out of the end zone.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Mason Crosby *K, Packers*
In win at Atlanta, made all four field goal attempts (among them a 56-yarder) and had touchbacks on six of his seven kickoffs.

PEPSI NFL ROOKIE
Aldon Smith *LB, 49ers*
Recorded two sacks while helping limit Buccaneers to 14 first downs and 272 total yards.

STANDINGS (10.18.11)

AFC EAST	W-L-T	PF	PA
Bills	4-1-0	164	120
Patriots	4-1-0	165	119
Jets	2-3-0	121	125
Dolphins	0-4-0	69	104
AFC NORTH	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Ravens	3-1-0	119	57
Bengals	3-2-0	110	94
Steelers	3-2-0	102	89
Browns	2-2-0	74	93
AFC SOUTH	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Texans	3-2-0	127	95
Titans	3-2-0	105	94
Jaguars	1-4-0	59	115
Colts	0-5-0	87	136
AFC WEST	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Chargers	4-1-0	120	109
Raiders	3-2-0	136	133
Chiefs	2-3-0	77	150
Broncos	1-4-0	105	140

NFC EAST	W-L-T	PF	PA
Redskins	3-1-0	83	63
Giants	3-2-0	127	123
Cowboys	2-2-0	99	101
Eagles	1-4-0	125	132
NFC NORTH	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Lions	5-0-0	159	89
Packers	5-0-0	173	111
Bears	2-3-0	107	122
Vikings	1-4-0	111	106
NFC SOUTH	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Saints	4-1-0	157	125
Buccaneers	3-2-0	87	125
Falcons	2-3-0	104	130
Panthers	1-4-0	116	132
NFC WEST	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
49ers	4-1-0	142	78
Seahawks	2-3-0	94	122
Cardinals	1-4-0	96	121
Rams	0-4-0	46	113

Week 6: PATRIOTS PREVAIL

OCTOBER 16
FALCONS 31.....Panthers 17
BENGALS 27.....Colts 17
49ers 25.....LIONS 19
PACKERS 24.....Rams 3
GIANTS 27.....Bills 24
STEELERS 17.....Jaguars 13
Eagles 20.....REDSKINS 13
RAVENS 29.....Texans 14
RAIDERS 24.....Browns 17
PATRIOTS 20.....Cowboys 16
BUCCANEERS 26.....Saints 20
BEARS 39.....Vikings 10

OCTOBER 17
JETS 24.....Dolphins 6

Byes: Broncos, Cardinals, Chargers, Chiefs, Seahawks, Titans

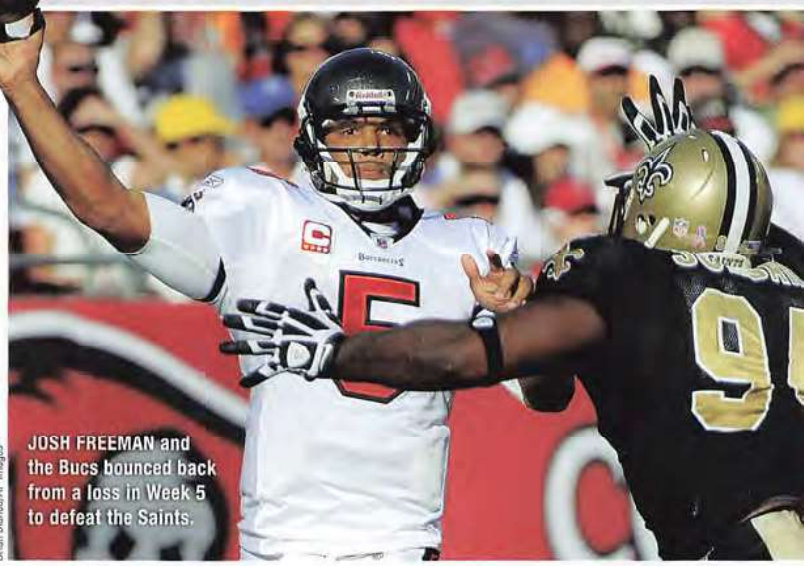
Trailing by three points with barely two minutes left on the clock, Tom Brady came through when his team needed him most, orchestrating a flawless 80-yard drive that delivered a 20-16 victory over visiting Dallas.

The Cowboys had kept the New England offense silent since midway through the second quarter, until Brady maneuvered downfield by completing passes to four different receivers, including tight end Aaron Hernandez, who caught the go-ahead 8-yard touchdown with 22 seconds remaining.

"Down at the end of the game we had a great drive and we came through with some big plays in the clutch, so you've got to give the players all the credit in the world," said Patriots head coach Bill Belichick, whose squad improved to 5-1 and moved one game ahead of the AFC East pack.

At the same time, it was a frustrating setback for the Cowboys, who had pulled within 13-10 on Jason Witten's 1-yard touchdown catch just before halftime and took the lead on a pair of Dan Bailey field goals. Dallas became the first team in the last 14 regular-season games to hold the Patriots below 30 points and had a chance to run out the clock when it got the ball with 3:36 to play.

But New England forced a quick three-and-out to give its offense one more opportunity. "All we had to do was get [Brady] the ball and you know what he's going to do after that," said Patriots linebacker Brandon Spikes, whose day included six solo tackles.



JOSH FREEMAN and the Bucs bounced back from a loss in Week 5 to defeat the Saints.

Brian Blanco/AP Images

▲ Baltimore's ANQUAN BOLDIN protects the ball from Texans defender Johnathan Joseph after one of his eight receptions.

Mitch Stringer/US Presswire

Patriots coach BILL BELICHICK saw his team rally past Dallas for its 20th straight regular-season home victory.

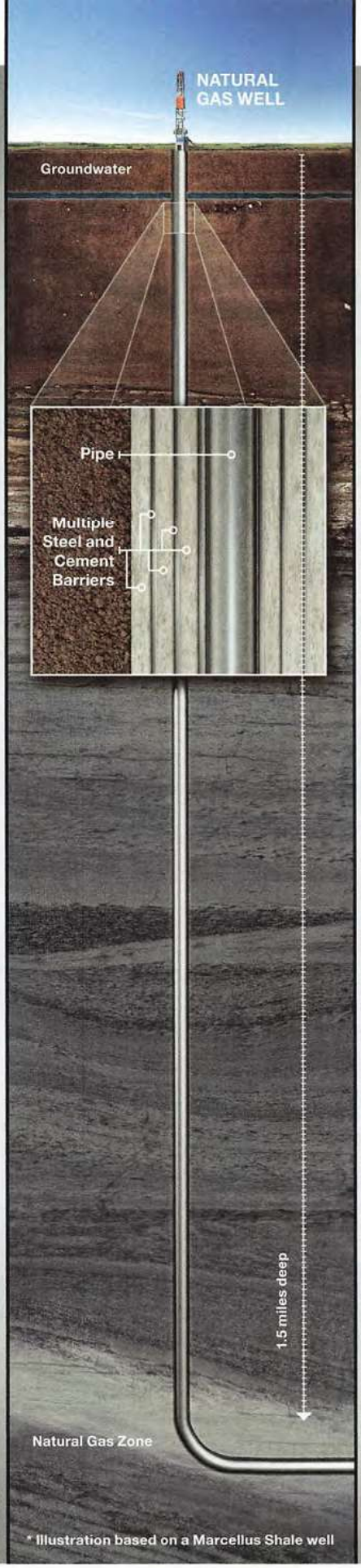
David Butler II/US Presswire

SUMMING UP WEEK SIX

■ One week after suffering a 45-point loss, Tampa Bay rebounded to upend the Saints, 26-20, and pull into a first-place tie in the NFC South. Josh Freeman (23 of 41, 303 yards) threw touchdown passes to Arrelious Benn and Preston Parker, and Connor Barth chipped in with four field goals in the win. New Orleans threatened in the final minutes, but Quincy Black intercepted a Drew Brees pass in the end zone and Freeman converted two first downs that allowed Tampa Bay to hold onto the ball. Brees threw for 383 yards in the loss, becoming the first player in league history with 350 or more passing yards in four straight games.

■ Aaron Rodgers fired first-half touchdown passes to Jordy Nelson, James Jones, and Donald Driver as part of a 24-3 win over St. Louis that kept the Packers undefeated. Rodgers, who finished with 310 yards through the air, became the first NFL quarterback to post a passer rating of 110.0 or higher in each of his team's first six games.

■ San Francisco knocked Detroit from the ranks of the unbeaten by taking a 25-19 decision at Ford Field, the go-ahead points coming on Alex Smith's 6-yard touchdown pass to



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- Detailed procedures are used to manage air quality and to reuse or responsibly dispose of water. We are continuing to work with the industry to develop best practices for the safe handling of produced water.

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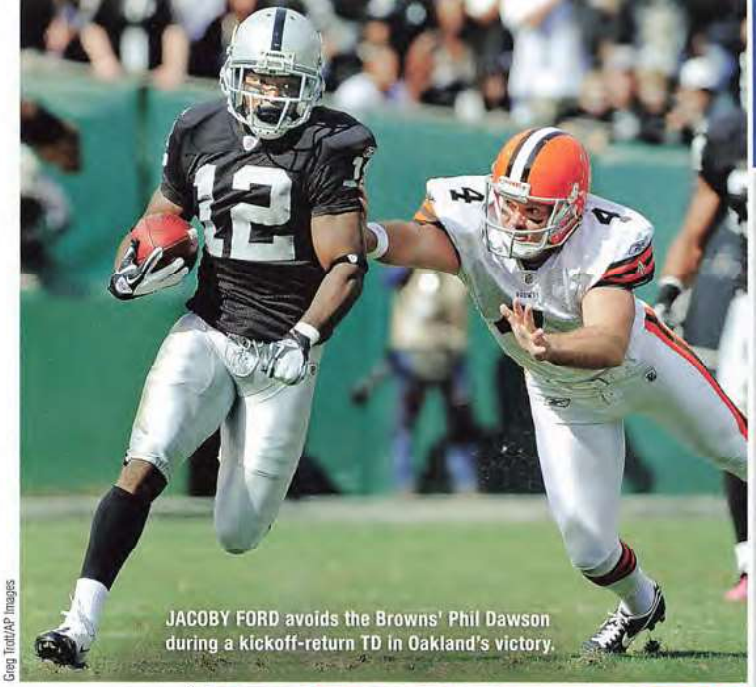
Delanie Walker on a fourth-down play with just 1:51 remaining. David Akers then added his third field goal of the game to account for the final margin.

■ Linebacker Ray Lewis was credited with a team-high 12 tackles and a sack in the Ravens' 29-14 victory over Houston, becoming the first player in league history to record 40 sacks and 30 interceptions in a career.

■ The Eagles' 20-13 win at Washington featured another touchdown by running back LeSean McCoy, the sixth straight game in which he scored. McCoy, whose 1-yard run put Philly ahead, 14-0, finished with 126 rushing yards.

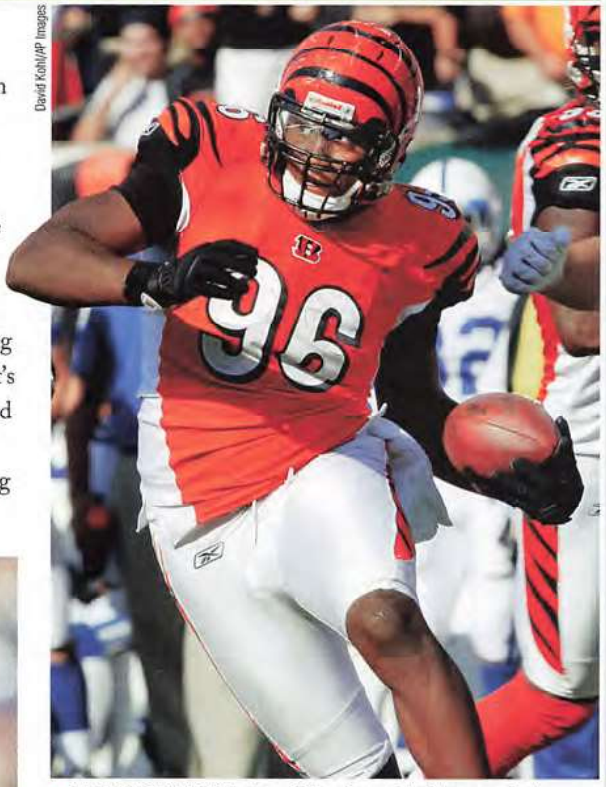
■ The Bengals improved to 4-2, equaling their win total from the entire 2010 season, by beating the Colts, 27-17. Rookie QB Andy Dalton (25 of 32, 264 yards, 1 TD) had one streak of 13 straight completions, and cornerback Nate Clements made six tackles and blocked a fourth-quarter field goal attempt that would have tied the game.

■ Atlanta overcame the Panthers, 31-17, by scoring 17 unanswered fourth-quarter points. Matt Bryant's 24-yard field goal tied the game and Matt Ryan and Michael Turner followed with short touchdown runs. Turner, who ended the game with 139 rushing yards, also scored the Falcons' first touchdown.



Greg Trott/AP Images

JACOBY FORD avoids the Browns' Phil Dawson during a kickoff-return TD in Oakland's victory.



David Kohl/AP Images

▲ CARLOS DUNLAP finishes off the Bengals' victory against the Colts with this 35-yard fumble return for a touchdown.

Brian Garfinkel/AP Images

LESEAN McCOY eyes some running room during the Eagles' win at Washington.

Week 6: PLAYER AWARDS

AFC

OFFENSE
Rashard Mendenhall *RB, Steelers*
Gained 113 of his 146 rushing yards in first half and scored team's first touchdown on an 8-yard run in victory over Jaguars.

DEFENSE
Darrelle Revis *CB, Jets*
Contributed three tackles, four passes defensed, and two interceptions–one that he brought back 100 yards for a touchdown–to take down Dolphins.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Jacoby Ford *KR-WR, Raiders*
Became just second player in NFL history to record four kickoff-return touchdowns in first 20 career games, bringing back a kick 101 yards for a score against Cleveland.

NFC

OFFENSE
Ahmad Bradshaw *RB, Giants*
Scored all three of team's TDs and finished with 104 yards rushing, including a 30-yard run that set up game-winning field goal vs. Buffalo.

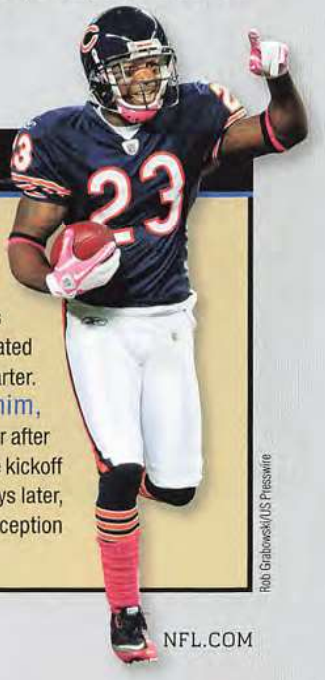
DEFENSE
Kurt Coleman *S, Eagles*
Became first Eagles player in 45 years to intercept three passes in a game and added six tackles in victory over Washington.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Devin Hester *KR-PR-WR, Bears*
Had a 98-yard kickoff return for a touchdown and caught a 48-yard scoring pass to help defeat Vikings.

PEPSI NFL ROOKIE
Aldon Smith *LB, 49ers*
Contributed four tackles, two sacks, a safety, and a forced fumble in win over previously undefeated Detroit.

MANY HAPPY RETURNS

Big returns provided big swings in Week 6. In Oakland, Jacoby Ford's 101-yard kickoff return for a TD came moments after the Browns had tied the game, 7-7, and paved the way for a 24-17 win. For Chicago, Devin Hester (right) brought back a kickoff 98 yards for a score, stemming any momentum the Vikings might have generated from Adrian Peterson's 4-yard touchdown run early in the third quarter. "The shocking part to us is that people still kick to him, because he is such a threat," said Bears quarterback Jay Cutler after his team's 39-10 victory. On Monday night, the Jets fumbled away the kickoff immediately after giving up an early field goal to Miami. But three plays later, cornerback Darrelle Revis rerouted his team with a 100-yard interception return for a touchdown in what became a 24-6 New York triumph.



Rob Grabowski/US Presswire

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Week 7: BRONCOS BUST OUT

OCTOBER 23
PANTHERS 33.....Redskins 20
BROWNS 6.....Seahawks 3
Falcons 23.....LIONS 16

Broncos 18.....DOLPHINS 15 (OT)
JETS 27.....Chargers 21
Bears 24.....BUCCANEERS 18*
Texans 41.....TITANS 7

Steelers 32.....CARDINALS 20
Chiefs 28.....RAIDERS 0
COWBOYS 34.....Rams 7
Packers 33.....VIKINGS 27

SAINTS 62.....Colts 7
**Played in London*

OCTOBER 24
JAGUARS 12.....Ravens 7

Byes: Bengals, Bills, Eagles, 49ers, Giants, Patriots

For better than 57 minutes, Denver's offense sputtered against Miami. But that all changed in an instant when Tim Tebow directed two late touchdown drives and then scored on a two-point conversion that suddenly sent the game into overtime.

Midway through the extra session, Broncos linebacker D.J. Williams forced a fumble that he then recovered, leading to a 52-yard Matt Prater field goal and an 18-15 Denver victory.

Tebow had struggled most of the afternoon—his team trailed, 15-0, and was in danger of being shutout for the first time in 19 years—until he led an 80-yard drive capped by a 5-yard scoring pass to Demaryius Thomas.

After Virgil Green recovered the onside kick, Tebow quickly took the Broncos 56 yards for another touchdown, this on a short pass to Daniel Fells with 25 seconds left. Still trailing by two, he tied the game on the ensuing two-point conversion attempt with a quick sprint up the middle.

"You can't lose confidence in yourself, or you've lost already," said Tebow, after playing in front of many of the same fans who watched him in his college days at the University of Florida. "When you get knocked down, you've got to keep getting back up."

In a season of comebacks, Denver's might have been the most improbable. The Broncos became the first team since 1970 to win a game after trailing by 15 or more points with three minutes remaining.

Bill Baptist/AP Images

Paced by ARIAN FOSTER, whose big day included a 78-yard TD catch, Houston beat Tennessee in an AFC South showdown.

SEVEN STORIES

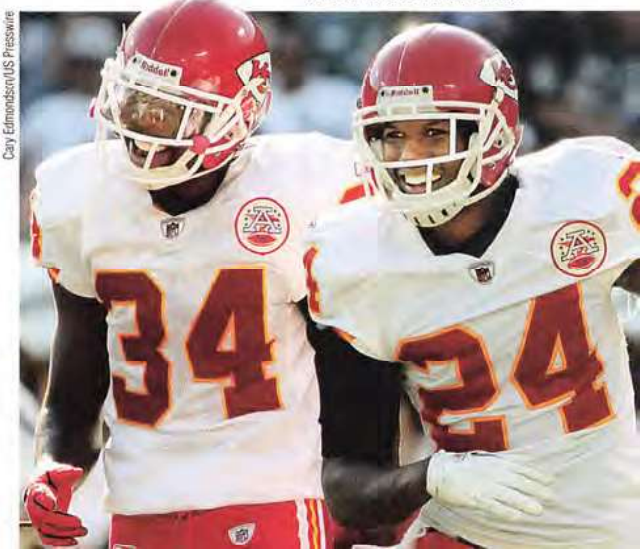
■ The NFL held a regular-season game at London's Wembley Stadium for the fifth straight year, with nearly 77,000 fans on hand for Chicago's 24-18 win over Tampa Bay. Matt Forté rushed for 145 yards and scored the game's first touchdown on a 32-yard run, while Jay Cutler's 226 passing yards included a TD to Roy Williams. Defensively, D.J. Moore stopped the Buccaneers' final threat with the last of the Bears' four interceptions on the day.

Jim Mone/AP Images

▲ **An early deficit didn't unsettle coach MIKE McCARTHY or the Packers, who rallied after halftime to top Minnesota.**

■ Green Bay improved to 7-0 with a 33-27 victory at Minnesota. Aaron Rodgers fired three touchdown passes, the biggest one a 79-yarder to Greg Jennings early in the third quarter that put the Packers ahead for good. Also playing big roles in the win were Mason Crosby, whose four field goals included one from 58 yards, and Charles Woodson, who had a pair of interceptions that helped Green Bay outscore the Vikings, 20-0, in the third quarter.

■ After an 0-3 start, the Chiefs reached the .500 mark by blanking the Raiders, 28-0, thanks to six interceptions, two that were brought back for touchdowns. Kendrick Lewis' 59-yard interception return opened the scoring less than three minutes into the game, and



Cary Edmondson/US Presswire

▼ **Chiefs defenders TRAVIS DANIELS (34) and BRANDON FLOWERS (24) are all smiles during the team's shutout of Oakland.**

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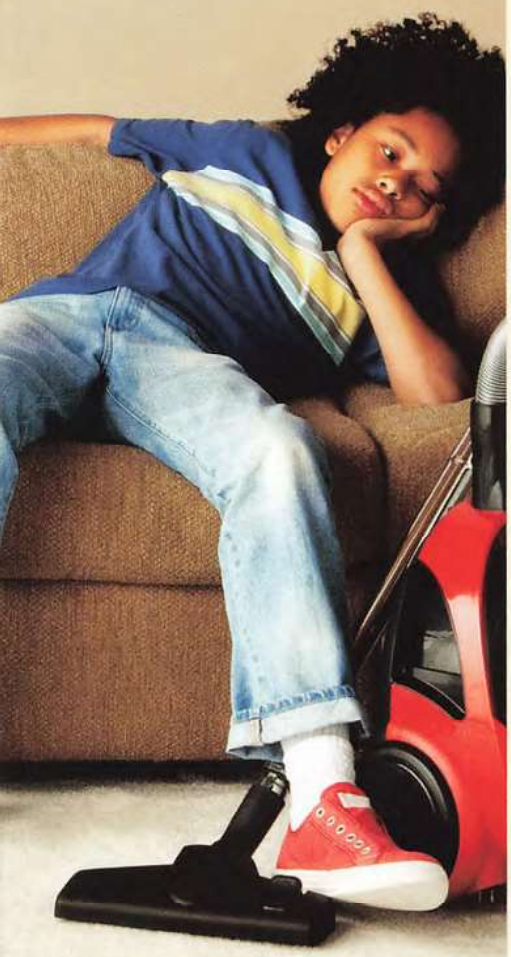

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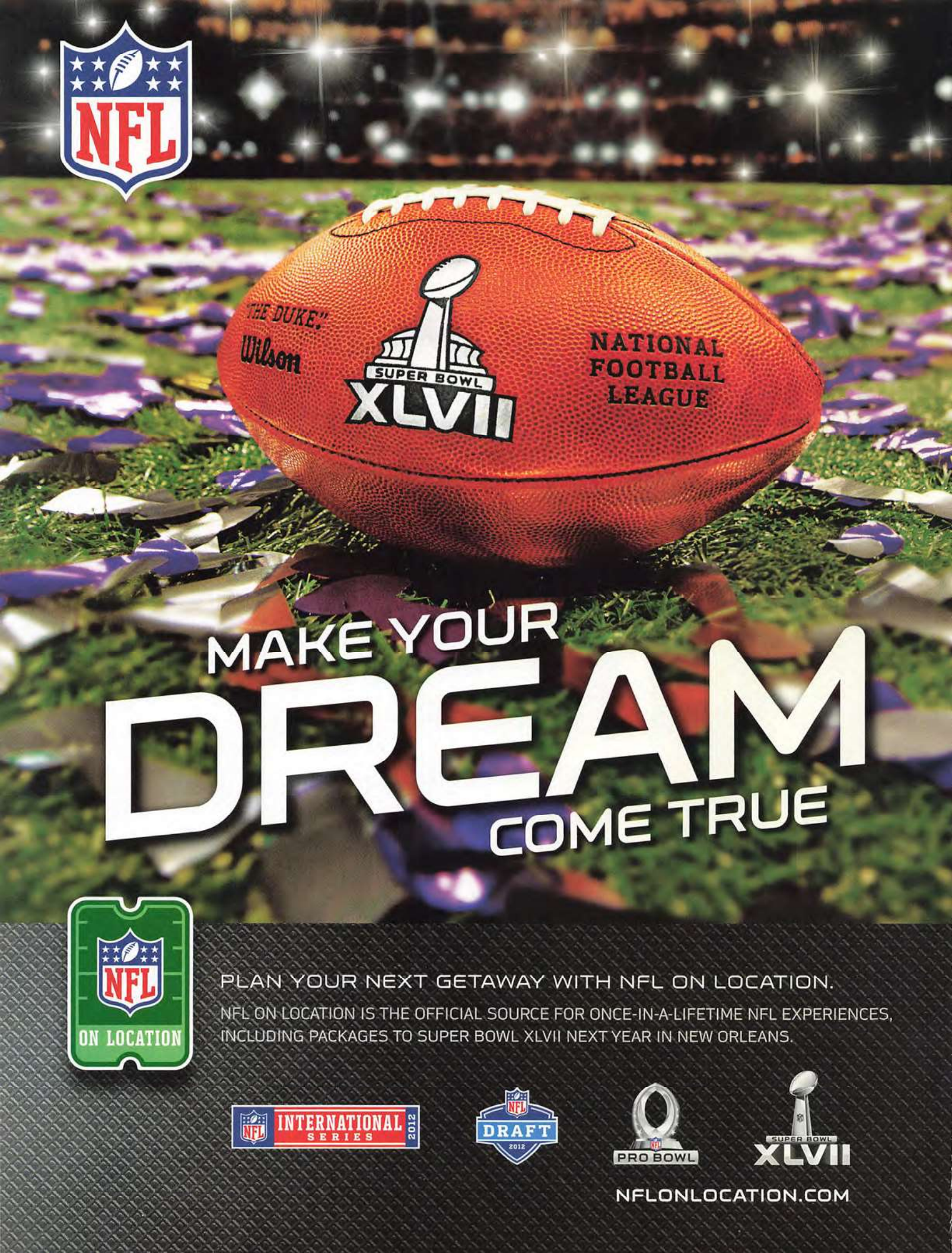
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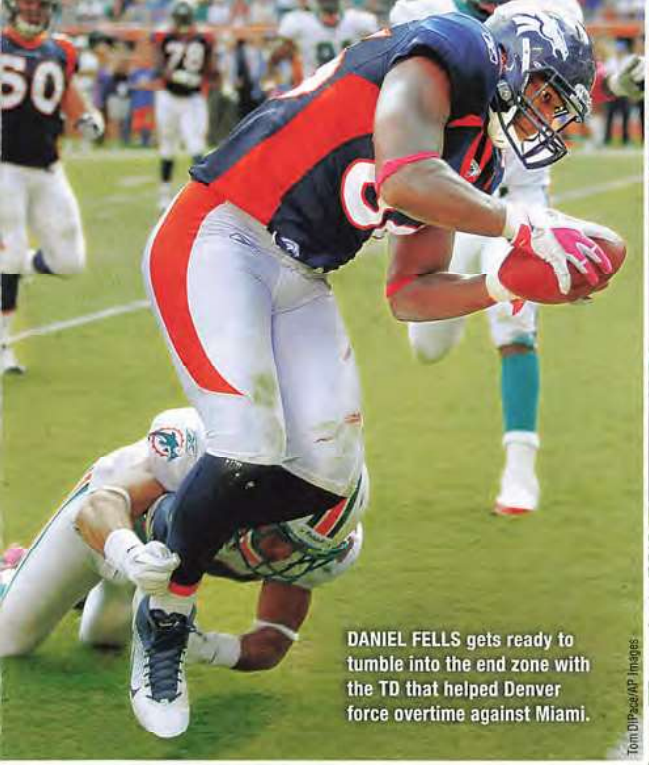


DANIEL FELLS gets ready to tumble into the end zone with the TD that helped Denver force overtime against Miami.

Tom DiPace/AP Images

Three was the magic number for the Jets' PLAXICO BURRESS, who caught a trio of scoring passes in a win over San Diego.

Bill Kostroun/AP Images

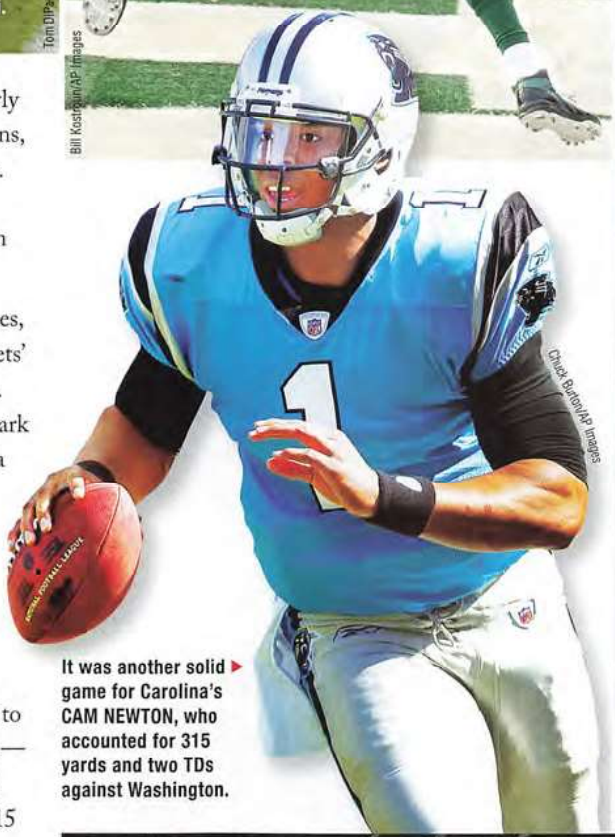
Brandon Flowers capped it with his 58-yarder early in the fourth quarter. In between those touchdowns, Le'Ron McClain and Javier Arenas ran for scores. Flowers also had a second interception and was joined in Kansas City's pickoff parade by Brandon Carr, Travis Daniels, and Jon McGraw.

■ Plaxico Burress made the most of his four catches, with three of them going for touchdowns in the Jets' 27-21 come-from-behind win against San Diego. His final scoring grab—on a 3-yard pass from Mark Sanchez early in the fourth quarter—came after a Darrelle Revis interception and gave New York its first lead of the game.

■ In their first meeting since Super Bowl XLIII, the Steelers outpointed the Cardinals, 32-20. Ben Roethlisberger threw for 361 yards and three TDs, one of those a franchise-record 95-yarder to Mike Wallace. After Arizona closed to within 17-14 on a long touchdown pass of its own—a 73-yard connection from Kevin Kolb to LaRod Stephens-Howling—Pittsburgh answered with 15 consecutive points to seize control for good.

■ Despite Calvin Johnson's 10th touchdown catch of the year, the Lions dropped their second straight game, falling to Matt Ryan and the Falcons, 23-16. The Atlanta QB ran one yard for the game's first touchdown and later threw an 18-yard scoring pass to Roddy White. Matt Bryant's three field goals accounted for the team's other nine points.

■ Cam Newton helped Carolina clip the Redskins, 33-20, by throwing for one TD and running for another. Newton totaled 256 yards passing and gained 59 on the ground, highlighted by a 16-yard scoring run that put the Panthers in front, 16-6.



It was another solid game for Carolina's CAM NEWTON, who accounted for 315 yards and two TDs against Washington.

Chuck Burton/AP Images

Week 7: PLAYER AWARDS

OFFENSE
Arian Foster *RB, Texans*
Dominant effort against Tennessee, rushing for 115 yards and adding 119 receiving yards—78 of those on a second-quarter touchdown reception.

DEFENSE
Brandon Flowers *CB, Chiefs*
In shutout victory at Oakland, contributed three tackles, three passes defensed, and a pair of interceptions, one that he returned 58 yards for a touchdown.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Josh Scobee *K, Jaguars*
Scored all of team's points in win over Baltimore, kicking field goals from 54, 54, 22, and 51 yards, and tied NFL mark with three FGs of 50 yards or longer in a game.

OFFENSE
Drew Brees *QB, Saints*
Helped team score most points in a regular-season NFL game in 26 years by completing 31 of 35 passes for 325 yards with five TDs and no interceptions against Colts.

DEFENSE
Lance Briggs *LB, Bears*
Solid performance in win over Tampa Bay with six tackles (one for a loss), an interception, and two passes defensed.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Mason Crosby *K, Packers*
Set franchise record with 58-yard field goal—one of four FGs he kicked on the day—as part of victory at Minnesota.

PEPSI NFL ROOKIE
DeMarco Murray *RB, Cowboys*
Ran 25 times for 253 yards and one touchdown in win over Rams, with his yardage total breaking the club's single-game rushing record.

AND THE RUNNER-UP IS...

Carlos Osorio/AP Images

"Trust me, Jerry Rice will never be caught. I'm very happy with second place."

~Falcons tight end Tony Gonzalez, whose five receptions against Detroit gave him 1,104 for his career and moved him into second place on the NFL's all-time list. Rice retired with 1,549 catches.

Week 8: STATELY SUCCESS

OCTOBER 30
RAVENS 30.....Cardinals 27
Vikings 24.....PANTHERS 21
TEXANS 24.....Jaguars 14
GIANTS 20.....Dolphins 17
RAMS 31.....Saints 21
TITANS 27.....Colts 10
BILLS 23.....Redskins 0*
Lions 45.....BRONCOS 10
STEELERS 25.....Patriots 17
49ERS 20.....Browns 10
Bengals 34.....SEAHAWKS 12
EAGLES 34.....Cowboys 7
*Played in Toronto

OCTOBER 31
CHIEFS 23.....Chargers 20 (OT)
Byes: Bears, Buccaneers, Falcons, Jets, Packers, Raiders

Two of the weekend's biggest games and the league's best rivalries took center stage in Pennsylvania, where the Steelers hosted New England and the Eagles opened their nest to Dallas.

Pittsburgh controlled the pace in its matchup, scoring on five drives that each consumed more than five minutes, paving the way for a 25-17 victory over the Patriots. Ben Roethlisberger fired first-half TD passes to Mewelde Moore and Antonio Brown, while Shaun Suisham kicked three field goals.

"We came in with the game plan to throw the ball," said Roethlisberger. "I felt like we did a good job of that. Our line gave me time to find my receivers and make the throws."

The Patriots pulled within six points on a late touchdown and had the ball again with under a minute remaining, but Steelers linebacker Brett Keisel forced a fumble that ultimately resulted in a game-clinching safety.

The Eagles scored on their first six possessions en route to a 34-7 win over the Cowboys. LeSean McCoy rushed for 185 yards and twice reached the end zone—on a 2-yard run in the first quarter and on a 13-yard carry that accounted for his team's final points.

"We started fast," said quarterback Michael Vick, who capped Philadelphia's opening drive with a 12-yard touchdown pass to Jeremy Maclin. "That was our mindset. We wanted to set the tempo. [And] we didn't want to let up."

The Eagles racked up 31 first downs and 495 total yards in winning their 13th straight game following a bye, the longest active streak in the NFL.

Kevin Terrell/AP Images

Detroit's MATTHEW STAFFORD targeted the Broncos for 267 passing yards and three TDs.

Jason O. Watson/US Presswire

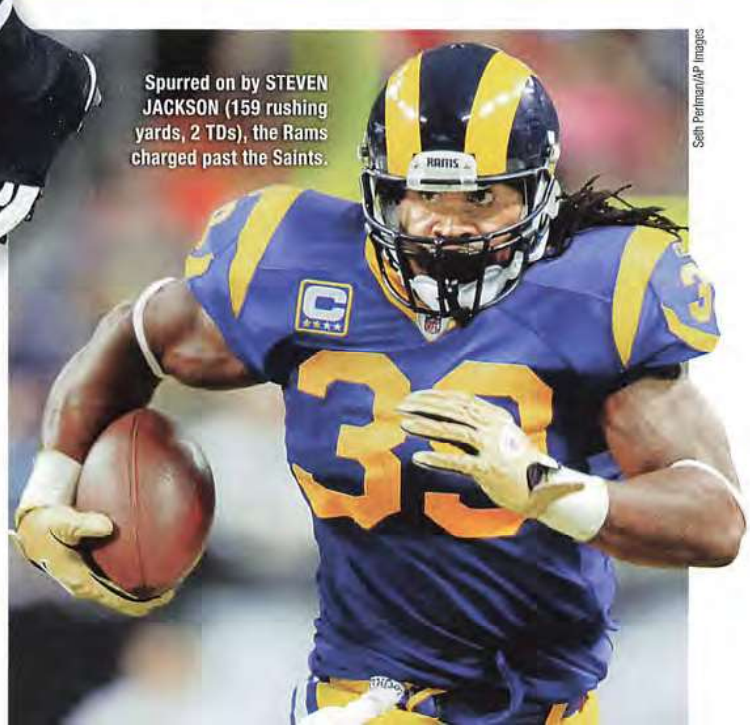
▲ FRANK GORE is congratulated by teammates after his 4-yard run opened the scoring in the 49ers' victory.

SOME GREATS FROM WEEK EIGHT

■ Buffalo moved back into a first-place tie in the AFC East with its 23-0 shutout of Washington. For the offense, Ryan Fitzpatrick completed 21 of 27 passes for 262 yards, while the defensive effort included 10 sacks and a pair of interceptions.

■ San Francisco improved to 6-1—its best start in 13 years—with a 20-10 victory over the Browns. Frank Gore rushed for 134 yards, including a 4-yard touchdown to open the scoring, and QB Alex Smith's day included a touchdown pass to Michael Crabtree that made it 17-0. The 49ers kept Cleveland out of the end zone until 6:17 remained in the game.

■ The NFC East-leading Giants recorded five sacks and used a fourth quarter rally to upend the Dolphins, 20-17. Lawrence Tynes kicked a 29-yard field goal to pull New York within four points, and after forcing a Miami punt, Eli Manning finished off a six-play drive with his 25-yard scoring pass to Victor Cruz. The Giants' defense then ended any


Seth Perlman/AP Images

Spurred on by STEVEN JACKSON (159 rushing yards, 2 TDs), the Rams charged past the Saints.

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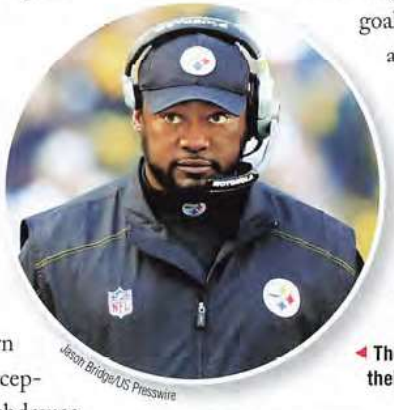
Miami comeback hopes with back-to-back sacks followed by a Corey Webster interception.

■ Arian Foster set a franchise record with his 12th 100-yard rushing game, gaining 112 and scoring once in the Texans' 24-14 win over Jacksonville. Houston outgained the Jaguars, 358-174, while improving to 5-3 and staying in first place in the AFC South.

■ Competition atop the AFC North remained tight as the Bengals improved to 5-2 by beating Seattle, 34-12. Rookie quarterback Andy Dalton threw scoring passes to Jerome Simpson and A.J. Green, and Cincinnati pulled away late on Brandon Tate's 56-yard punt return and Reggie Nelson's 75-yard interception return that both went for touchdowns.



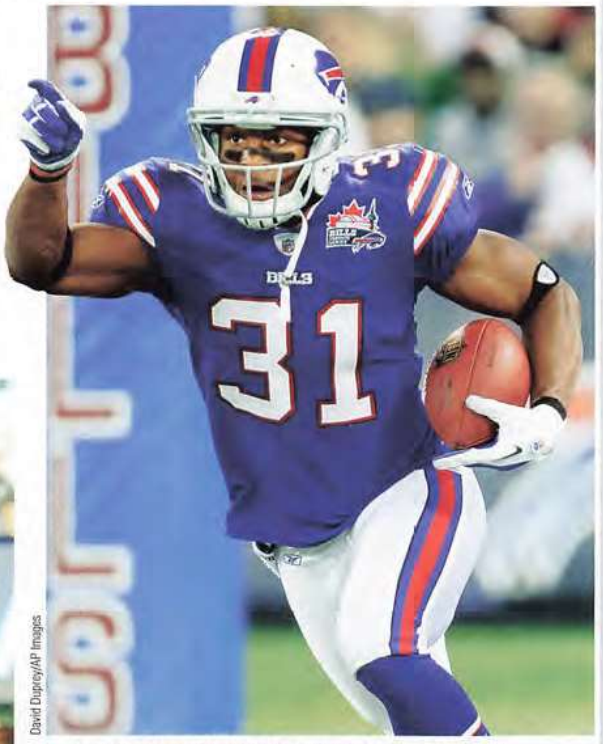
Jason Bridge/US Presswire

■ St. Louis won its first game of the year, 31-21 over the Saints. Steven Jackson rushed for 159 yards and scored on a pair of 3-yard runs, while Darian Stewart thwarted a late New Orleans rally with his 27-yard interception return for a touchdown.

■ Chris Houston brought back an interception 100 yards for a score and Cliff Avril ran 24 yards with a fumble recovery for another touchdown as the Lions rolled over the Broncos, 45-10. After yielding a field goal on Denver's opening drive, Detroit scored the game's next 45 points, capped by Houston's pickoff early in the fourth quarter.

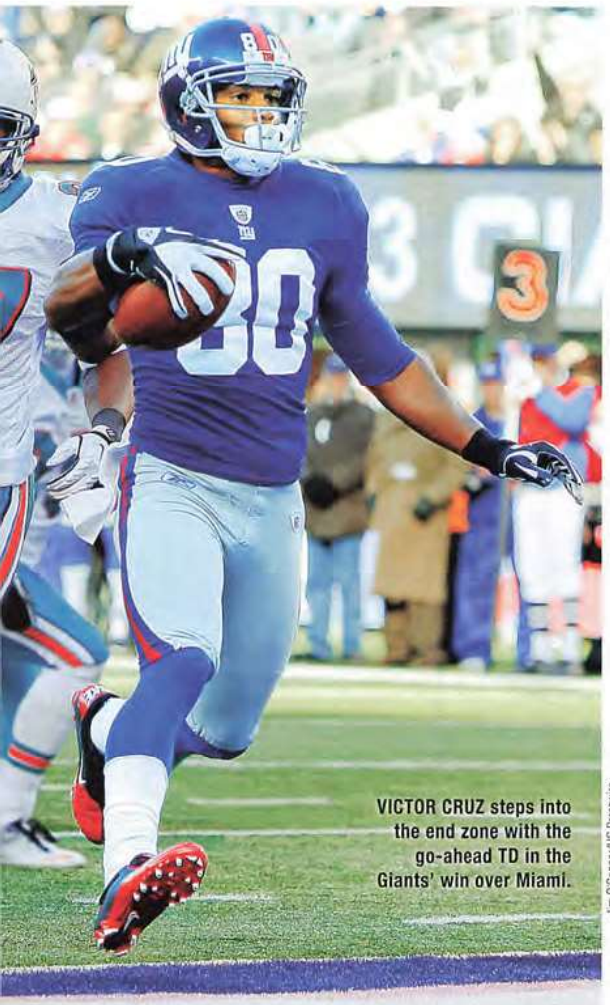
■ The Chiefs' 20-17 victory over San Diego forced a three-way tie for first in the AFC West. Linebacker Andy Studebaker recovered a fumble that prevented the Chargers from a game-winning field goal attempt in the final minute, and Ryan Succop won it in overtime with his 30-yard FG. Kansas City became the first NFL team to win four straight games after losing three in a row to start the season, and shared the division lead with San Diego and Oakland.

◀ **The Steelers and coach MIKE TOMLIN set their sights on a victory over the Patriots.**



David Duprey/AP Images

▲ **JAIRUS BYRD looks for blockers as he brings back an interception during the Bills' shutout of Washington.**



Jim O'Connor/US Presswire

VICTOR CRUZ steps into the end zone with the go-ahead TD in the Giants' win over Miami.

ONE FOR THE BOOKS

Never had the Ravens rallied like this and never had the NFL seen so many such comebacks in a season. For the fifth time in eight weeks, a team trailing by 20 or more points emerged a winner. Baltimore found itself behind the Cardinals, 24-3, victimized by three Arizona TDs in a five-minute stretch of the second quarter. But after Billy Cundiff's field goal provided a spark, Ray Rice (right) fired up the home crowd by scoring three straight touchdowns, the last coming on a 3-yard run early in the fourth quarter that moved the Ravens in front, 27-24. "We woke up, plain and simple," said receiver Anquan Boldin, who caught seven passes for 145 yards. Arizona later tied up the game, but in the final minute, the Ravens drove deep into Cardinals territory to set up Cundiff's game-winning 25-yard field goal as time expired.

Paul Spinelli/AP Images

Week 8: PLAYER AWARDS

OFFENSE
Ben Roethlisberger ***QB, Steelers***
Completed 36 of 50 passes for 365 yards and two TDs – the 18th 300-yard game of his career – to lead victory over Patriots.

DEFENSE
Derrick Johnson ***LB, Chiefs***
In overtime win against Chargers, registered 13 tackles, one sack, one pass defensed, and added a first-quarter interception that led to a touchdown.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Brandon Tate ***KR-WR, Bengals***
Totaled 186 return yards, including a 56-yard punt-return touchdown – the team's first PR-TD since 2003 – to help defeat Seattle.

OFFENSE
LeSean McCoy ***RB, Eagles***
Rushed for 185 yards and scored two touchdowns – giving him a TD in each of team's first seven games – sparking win over Dallas.

DEFENSE
Cliff Avril ***DE, Lions***
Huge game in victory at Denver, with two sacks, two forced fumbles, and a 24-yard fumble-return TD to help Detroit post largest margin of victory on road since 1970.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Robert Quinn ***DE, Rams***
Blocked a punt that set up a key touchdown just before halftime in win over Saints.

PEPSI NFL ROOKIE
Marcell Dareus ***DE, Bills***
As part of a defense that limited Redskins to 173 total yards, tallied four tackles and 2.5 sacks.

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Week 9: HALFWAY PERFECT

NOVEMBER 6
Jets 27.....BILLS 11
COWBOYS 23.....Seahawks 13
TEXANS 30.....Browns 12

Falcons 31.....COLTS 7
Dolphins 31.....CHIEFS 3
SAINTS 27.....Buccaneers 16
49ers 19.....REDSKINS 11

Broncos 38.....RAIDERS 24
Bengals 24.....TITANS 17
CARDINALS 19.....Rams 13 (OT)
Giants 24.....PATRIOTS 20

Packers 45.....CHARGERS 38
Ravens 23.....STEELERS 20
NOVEMBER 7
Bears 30.....EAGLES 24

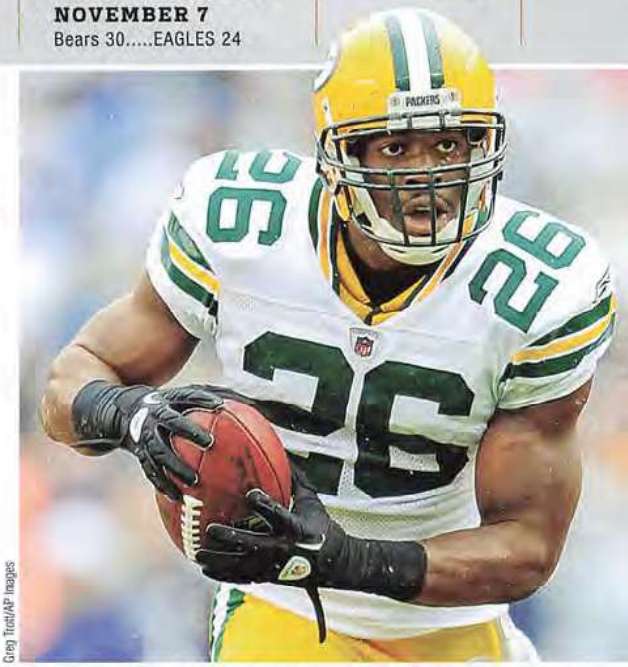
Byes: Jaguars, Lions, Panthers, Vikings

Although the game may have been a bit too close for comfort down the stretch, it ended with Green Bay notching another victory. By holding off San Diego, 45-38, the Packers improved to 8-0 and continued to state their case as the league's best team.

They also became the third defending Super Bowl champion to open the following season with eight straight wins, joining the 1990 49ers and the 1998 Broncos.

Green Bay was rolling early with Charlie Peprah and Tramon Williams bringing back first-quarter interceptions for touchdowns, and things appeared well in hand after Aaron Rodgers' fourth scoring pass of the day—a 4-yarder to Greg Jennings—made it 45-24 with 10:24 remaining. The TD throws came as part of a 21-of-26, 247-yard performance for the seventh-year quarterback.

"I think Aaron has a lot of strengths. His decision-making [right now] is at the highest level that I have personally been part of," said Packers head coach Mike McCarthy.

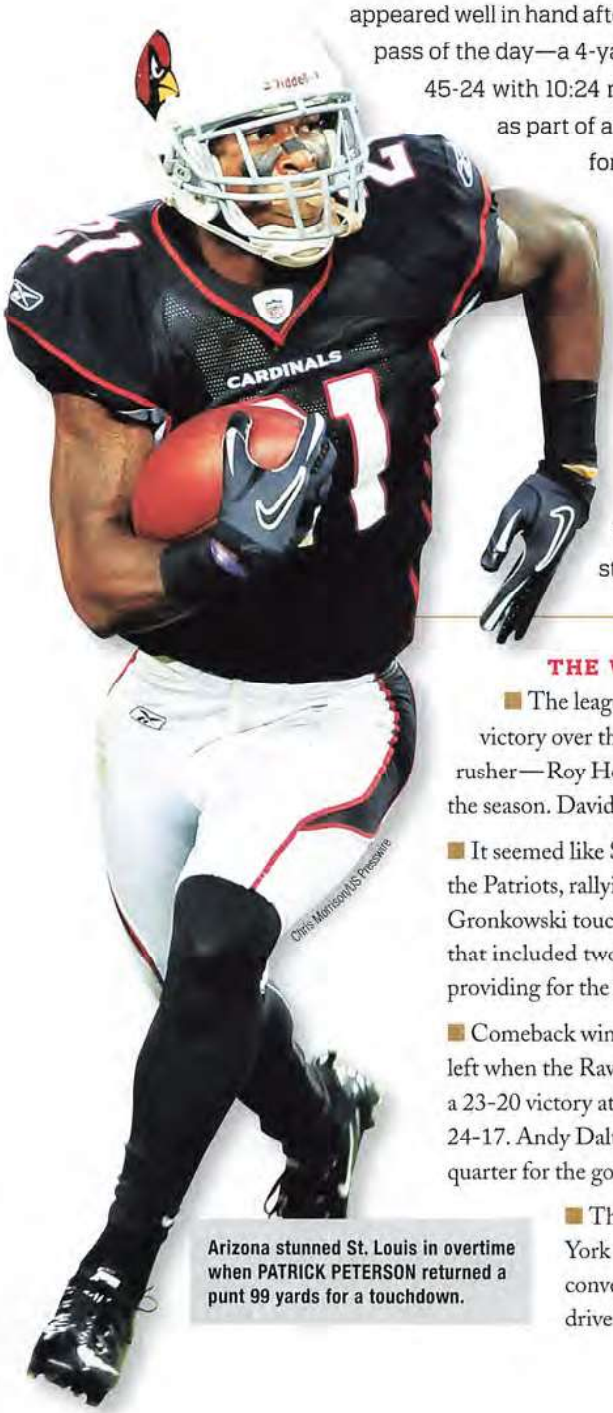


Greg Trott/AP Images

▲ **CHARLIE PEPRAH salted away Green Bay's victory over the Chargers with his second interception of the game.**

The Chargers, however, didn't go down quietly. They struck for back-to-back touchdowns in a span of 1:07 to get within one score, and were on the march again in the final minute until Peprah's second interception ended the threat.

San Diego's Philip Rivers led all Week 9 quarterbacks with 385 passing yards and matched Rodgers with four TD passes, but also was picked off three times. He had gone his first 90 NFL starts without throwing three interceptions, the longest streak to start a career in league history.



Chris Morrison/MS Presswire

Arizona stunned St. Louis in overtime when PATRICK PETERSON returned a punt 99 yards for a touchdown.

THE WHOLE NINE YARDS

■ The league's second-best record belonged to the 49ers, who improved to 7-1 following their 19-11 victory over the Redskins. San Francisco's defense made it 30 straight games without allowing a 100-yard rusher—Roy Helu's 41 yards led Washington—and continued its streak of not allowing a rushing TD on the season. David Akers kicked four field goals in the win, one of those a 52-yarder.

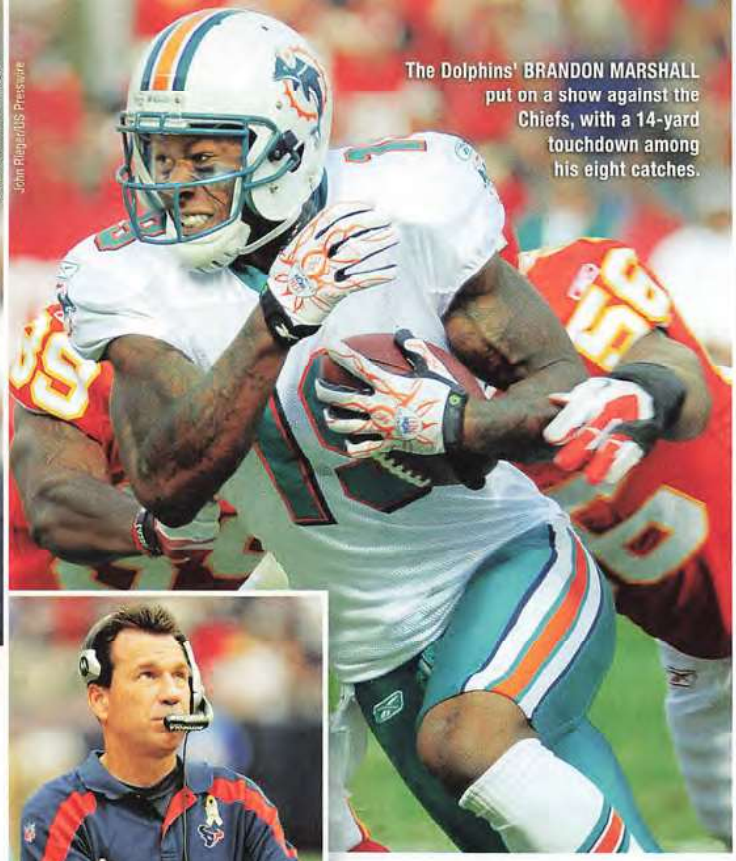
■ It seemed like Super Bowl XLII all over again as Eli Manning produced another "Giant moment" against the Patriots, rallying his team to victory in the final seconds. New England had moved in front on a Rob Gronkowski touchdown catch with just 1:36 to play, but Manning responded with an 8-play, 80-yard drive that included two third-down conversions and was capped by his 1-yard scoring throw to Jake Ballard, providing for the 24-20 win. With the victory, New York's lead in the NFC East grew to two games.

■ Comeback wins gave Baltimore and Cincinnati a share of the AFC North lead. Just eight seconds were left when the Ravens' Torrey Smith caught a 26-yard touchdown pass from Joe Flacco, lifting his team to a 23-20 victory at Pittsburgh and a sweep of their season series. Meanwhile, the Bengals edged Tennessee, 24-17. Andy Dalton threw three TD passes, including a 5-yarder to Andre Caldwell early in the fourth quarter for the go-ahead points. The win was Cincinnati's fifth straight, its longest streak in 23 seasons.

■ The Jets bested the Bills, 27-11, to place themselves in the grouping atop the AFC East. New York did it with defense, forcing three turnovers and thwarting Buffalo on a pair of fourth-down conversion attempts. One of those turnovers led to a LaDainian Tomlinson TD, while a Bills drive that was stopped on downs was followed by a Jets march that drained nearly eight minutes

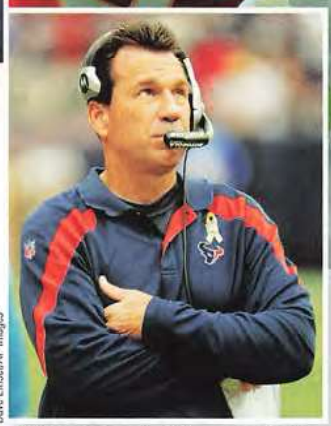
James D. Smith/AP Images

▲ Dallas' DeMARCO MURRAY sliced through Seattle for 139 rushing yards.



John Rieger-US Presswire

The Dolphins' BRANDON MARSHALL put on a show against the Chiefs, with a 14-yard touchdown among his eight catches.



Dave Einsel/AP Images

▲ With a 6-3 mark, things were looking up for GARY KUBIAK and the Texans.

off the clock and was finished off by a John Conner touchdown run that made it 27-3.

■ Denver rushed for 299 yards—163 by Willis McGahee and another 118 from QB Tim Tebow—in its 38-24 win at Oakland. McGahee also scored twice. His 60-yard scamper on the final play of the third quarter tied the game, and after Eddie Royal brought back a punt 85 yards for the go-ahead touchdown, he padded the Broncos' lead with a 24-yard scoring run.

■ The AFC South-leading Texans also fashioned a pair of 100-yard rushers in their 30-12 win over Cleveland, with Arian Foster gaining 124 and Ben Tate adding 115. Both players scored as well. Tate's 27-yard dart put the game's first points on the board and Foster made it 21-3 with his 19-yard run early in the second quarter. Houston, whose defense allowed just 172 total yards and didn't allow a touchdown until the final minutes, moved three games over .500 for the first time in franchise history.

■ Chicago scored the game's final 13 points to slip past the Eagles, 30-24. Philadelphia had taken a third-quarter lead on LeSean McCoy's 33-yard touchdown run, but the Bears' defense then went into shutdown mode while their offense struck with two Robbie Gould field goals and Jay Cutler's go-ahead 5-yard TD pass to Earl Bennett with 12:18 to play.

Week 9: PLAYER AWARDS

AFC

OFFENSE
Matt Moore *QB, Dolphins*
Gave a 17-of-23, 244-yard passing effort in victory over Chiefs, with three TDs and no interceptions for a Week 9-best 147.5 passer rating.

DEFENSE
David Harris *LB, Jets*
Helped contain Bills to a season-low 11 points by registering five tackles, one interception, and one pass defensed.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Eddie Royal *PR-WR, Broncos*
85-yard punt return for go-ahead touchdown and caught a 26-yard scoring pass in win at Oakland.

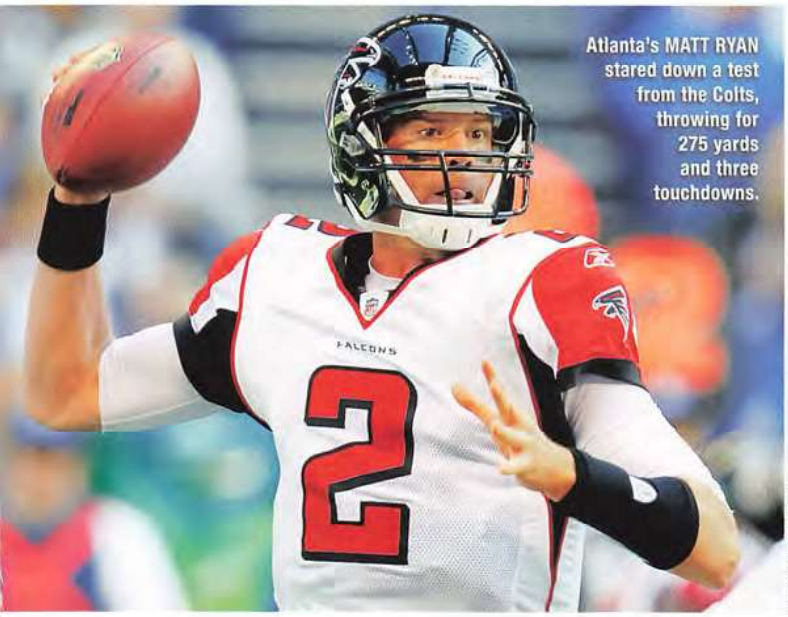
NFC

OFFENSE
Aaron Rodgers *QB, Packers*
Had a 145.8 passer rating in win at San Diego, becoming first QB in NFL history with a rating of 110+ in eight straight games in a season.

DEFENSE
Mathias Kiwanuka *LB, Giants*
Made 12 tackles and intercepted a pass while helping snap Patriots' 20-game regular-season home winning streak.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Patrick Peterson *PR-CB, Cardinals*
Had second-longest punt-return TD in league history (99 yards) to defeat Rams in overtime.

PEPSI NFL ROOKIE
Andy Dalton *QB, Bengals*
Completed 22 of 39 passes for 217 yards and three touchdowns in win over Titans.



Michael Conroy/AP Images

Atlanta's MATT RYAN stared down a test from the Colts, throwing for 275 yards and three touchdowns.

STANDINGS (11.08.11)

AFC EAST	W-L-T	PF	PA
Bills	5-3-0	222	174
Jets	5-3-0	199	163
Patriots	5-3-0	222	184
Dolphins	1-7-0	138	169
AFC NORTH	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Bengals	6-2-0	195	140
Ravens	6-2-0	208	130
Steelers	6-3-0	196	162
Browns	3-5-0	119	170
AFC SOUTH	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Texans	6-3-0	236	157
Titans	4-4-0	156	169
Jaguars	2-6-0	98	163
Colts	0-9-0	128	283
AFC WEST	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Chargers	4-4-0	199	204
Chiefs	4-4-0	131	201
Raiders	4-4-0	184	216
Broncos	3-5-0	171	224

NFC EAST	W-L-T	PF	PA
Giants	6-2-0	198	184
Cowboys	4-4-0	179	175
Eagles	3-5-0	203	182
Redskins	3-5-0	127	158
NFC NORTH	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Packers	8-0-0	275	179
Lions	6-2-0	239	147
Bears	5-3-0	200	174
Vikings	2-6-0	172	199
NFC SOUTH	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Saints	6-3-0	287	205
Falcons	5-3-0	189	170
Buccaneers	4-4-0	147	196
Panthers	2-6-0	187	207
NFC WEST	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
49ers	7-1-0	206	118
Cardinals	2-6-0	162	196
Seahawks	2-6-0	122	185
Rams	1-7-0	100	211

Week 10: A SAN FRAN TREAT

NOVEMBER 10
Raiders 24....CHARGERS 17
NOVEMBER 13
Saints 26....FALCONS 23 (OT)
Titans 30....PANTHERS 3
Steelers 24....BENGALS 17
Rams 13....BROWNS 12
COWBOYS 44....Bills 7
Jaguars 17....COLTS 3
Broncos 17....CHIEFS 10
DOLPHINS 20....Redskins 9
Cardinals 21....EAGLES 17
Texans 37....BUCCANEERS 9
SEAHAWKS 22....Ravens 17
49ERS 27....Giants 20
BEARS 37....Lions 13
Patriots 37....JETS 16
NOVEMBER 14
PACKERS 45....Vikings 7

The NFC West-leading 49ers made it seven straight wins, striking for two fourth-quarter touchdowns and then hanging on to defeat the Giants, 27-20, in this midseason showdown.

What began as a low-scoring affair—with New York clutching a 13-12 lead after three quarters—quickly changed when Alex Smith launched a 31-yard touchdown pass to Vernon Davis to put the 49ers ahead. That was followed by Carlos Rogers' second interception of the game, which Kendall Hunter turned into another TD on a 17-yard run that extended the advantage to 27-13.

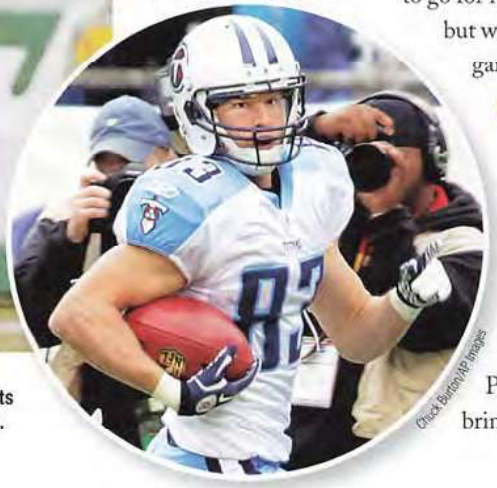
Still, Giants QB Eli Manning nearly engineered another late comeback. He closed the gap to seven points with a 32-yard scoring strike to Hakeem Nicks down the left sideline, then in the closing minutes hit on a pair of fourth-down throws to keep a potential game-tying drive alive. But on a fourth-and-two play from the San Francisco 10-yard line, 49ers defensive end Justin Smith batted down a Manning pass to end the threat.

"I've just walked off the field with joy inside. Right now, we're 8-1," said Rogers, who added six tackles as part of the victory. "We stuck to it to the end, and [in the] last minute of the game made a play."

The 49ers continued their best start in 14 seasons and maintained a five-game lead in the division. They also owned the league's second-best record behind the undefeated Packers, who easily handled Minnesota, 45-7, to improve to 9-0.

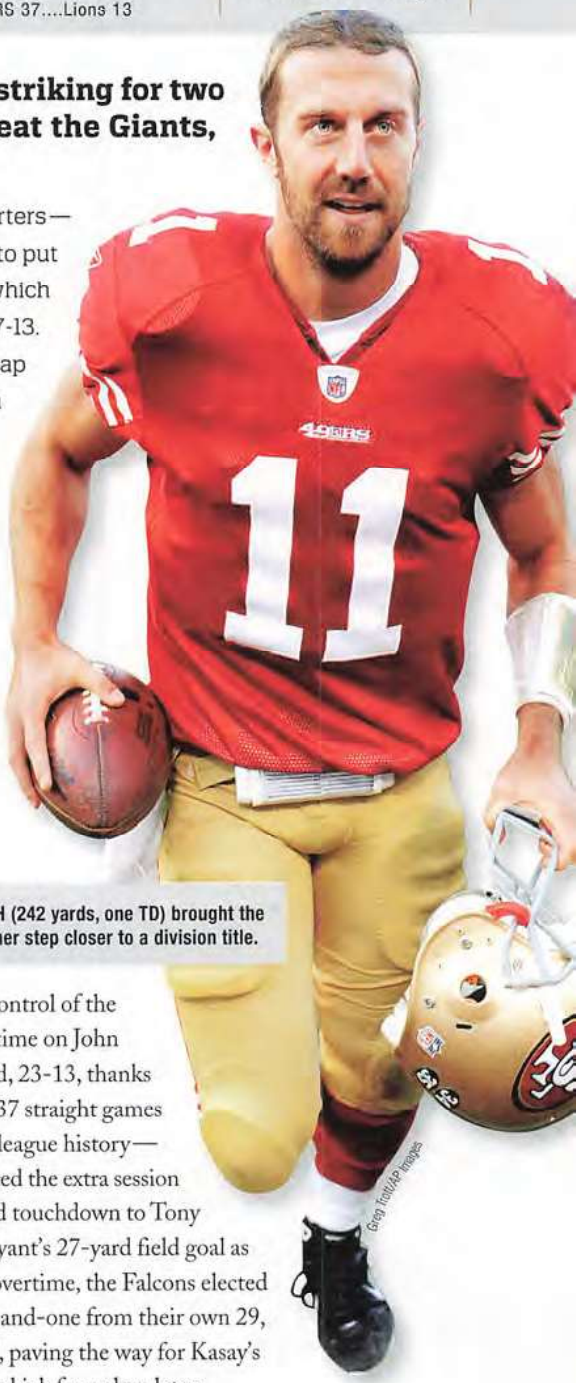
Kathy Willens/AP Photos

▲ **ROB GRONKOWSKI grabbed a pair of touchdown receptions as the Patriots moved above the pack in the AFC East.**



Chuck Burton/AP Images

▼ **Aided by this 79-yard punt-return touchdown, MARC MARIANI and the Titans were triumphant.**



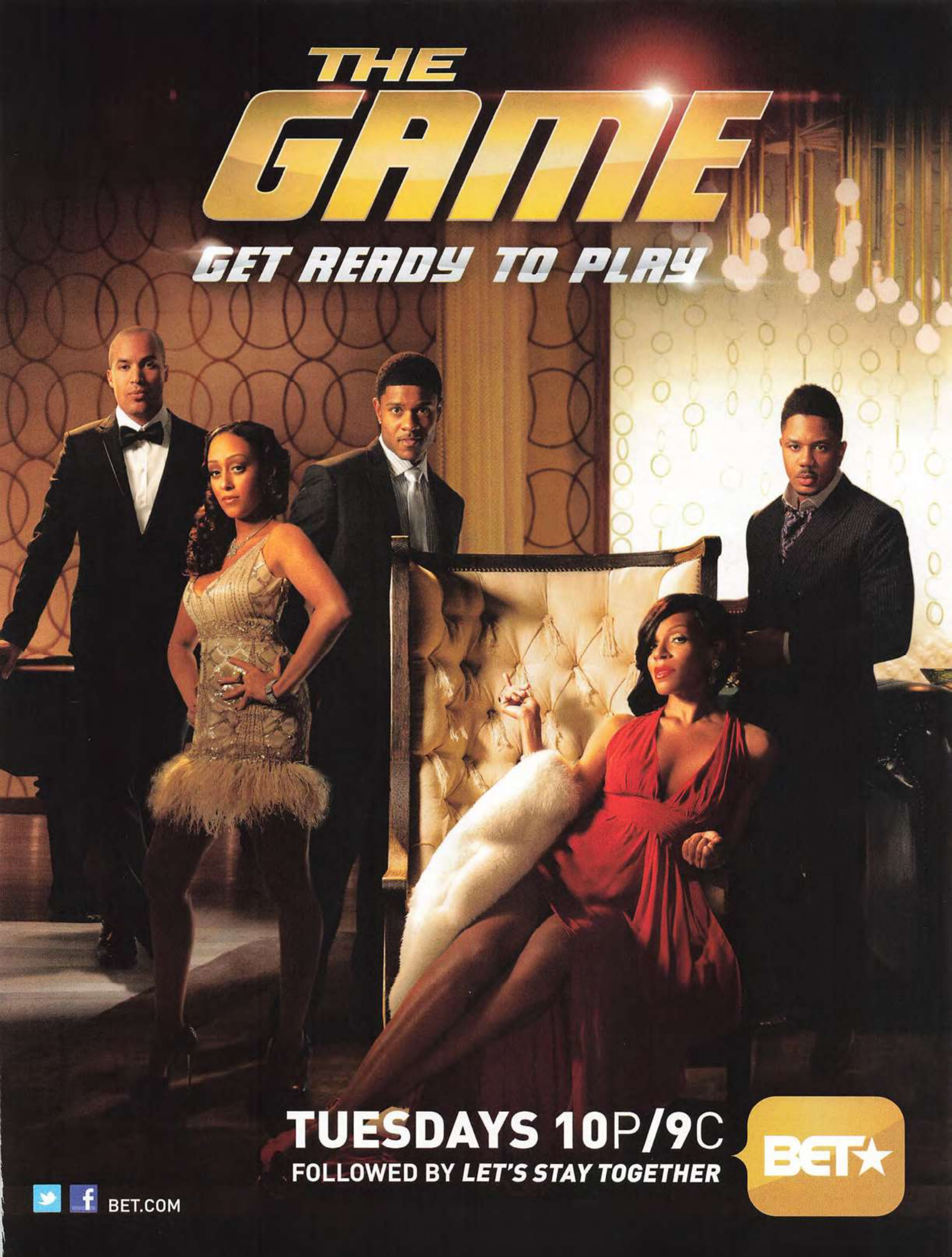
Greg Trott/AP Images

ALEX SMITH (242 yards, one TD) brought the 49ers another step closer to a division title.

MID-NOVEMBER MUSINGS

■ New Orleans prevailed in a pivotal game for control of the NFC South, beating the Falcons, 26-23, in overtime on John Kasay's 26-yard field goal. The Saints were ahead, 23-13, thanks to a pair of Drew Brees TD passes—giving him 37 straight games with a scoring toss, the second-longest streak in league history—and three Kasay field goals. Atlanta, however, forced the extra session on Matt Ryan's 20-yard touchdown to Tony Gonzalez and Matt Bryant's 27-yard field goal as time expired. Early in overtime, the Falcons elected to go for it on fourth-and-one from their own 29, but were stopped, paving the way for Kasay's game-winning kick four plays later.

■ The Patriots regained the upper hand in the AFC East, beating the Jets, 37-16. In the process, they set an NFL mark for wins by a head coach-quarterback combination as Bill Belichick and Tom Brady won their 117th game together. Brady's 18-yard touchdown pass to Rob Gronkowski just before halftime put New England ahead to stay, and he struck two more times after intermission—on a 5-yard throw to Gronkowski and on an 8-yarder to Deion Branch. Patriots linebacker Rob Ninkovich closed out the scoring by bringing back a fourth-quarter interception 12 yards for a TD.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Both Texas teams came away with wins. Houston overwhelmed Tampa Bay, 37-9, thanks to a pair of long Matt Schaub touchdown passes and a defense that produced four turnovers and four sacks. Schaub put the Texans on the board with an 80-yard pass to Jacoby Jones on the team's first play from scrimmage and later increased the lead to 17-0 with a 78-yard pass to Arian Foster. Brice McCain, Quintin Demps, and Brian Cushing all intercepted passes in the victory. The script

Christopher Hanewinckel/US Presswire

▲ KAMERION WIMBLEY (seven tackles, four sacks) and the Raiders set down the Chargers in a Thursday night affair.

Michael Hickey/US Presswire

▲ Teammates surround MAURICE JONES-DREW (32) after his 3-yard touchdown run capped a 114-yard afternoon and sewed up the Jaguars' victory over Indianapolis.

was similar for Dallas, which dominated Buffalo, 44-7. Tony Romo fired three touchdown passes before the game was 18 minutes old and finished 23 of 26 for 270 yards. Terence Newman picked off two passes for the Cowboys, one that he brought back 43 yards for a TD.

Rashard Mendenhall scored twice, including a 9-yard scamper late in the third quarter for the go-ahead points, as the Steelers edged Cincinnati, 24-17. Pittsburgh's defense then held its ground in the final 15 minutes with William Gay and Lawrence Timmons picking off passes to stop Bengals drives.

Third-quarter interception returns for touchdowns by Charles Tillman and Major Wright helped carry Chicago to its fourth straight victory, 37-13 over the Lions. Devin Hester added an 82-yard punt return for a score, while the Bears' defense allowed only 12 first downs and 216 total yards.

John Skelton's third touchdown pass of the game, on a 5-yard screen to Early Doucet with 1:53 to play, lifted the Cardinals over the Eagles, 21-17. Larry Fitzgerald, who was on the receiving end of Skelton's first two TDs, made a lunging 37-yard grab on a third-and-10 to set up the winning score.

David Goldman/AP Images

▲ SEAN PAYTON and the Saints were braced for a tough matchup at Atlanta.

Week 10: PLAYER AWARDS

AFC

OFFENSE
Michael Bush *RB, Raiders*
Rushed for a Week 10-leading 157 yards with one TD and added three catches for another 85 yards in win at San Diego.

DEFENSE
Andre Carter *DE, Patriots*
Set a franchise record with 4.5 sacks – his third game of the year with multiple sacks – and was part of a defense that forced three turnovers to help defeat Jets.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Marc Mariani *PR-WR, Titans*
Averaged 17.2 yards on six punt returns, highlighted by a 79-yarder for a touchdown that opened the scoring in victory at Carolina.

NFC

OFFENSE
Larry Fitzgerald *WR, Cardinals*
Made seven receptions – all of which either went for a touchdown or a first down – for 146 yards and set franchise mark with 70th career TD catch during win at Philadelphia.

DEFENSE
Roman Harper *S, Saints*
Totaled 13 tackles and a sack, and broke up a pass in the end zone that stopped Falcons from taking lead in eventual overtime triumph.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Devin Hester *KR-PR-WR, Bears*
Added to his NFL mark with 12th punt-return TD of career, an 82-yarder during victory over Lions.

PEPSI NFL ROOKIE
Denarius Moore *WR, Raiders*
Had five catches for 123 yards, two of those for touchdowns (from 33 and 26 yards) in victory over Chargers.

GETTING THEIR KICKS IN

On a weekend when many of their brethren had trouble, a few kickers came up big, including Steven Hauschka (right). The Seattle kicker made all five of his field goal attempts in a 22-17 win over Baltimore. He connected on a 22-yarder in the first quarter and proceeded to hit from 38, 39, and 35 yards before halftime. His 30-yarder early in the third quarter pushed the Seahawks' lead to 22-7, giving them a cushion they would need to beat a team yielding the third-fewest points (16.9 ppg) in the NFL. Also delivering on the weekend were the 49ers' David Akers and the Saints' John Kasay, who each made four field goals in their teams' close victories, and Josh Brown, whose 34-yard fourth-quarter field goal was enough to push the Rams past Cleveland, 13-12.

Elaine Thompson/AP

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Week 11: WILD IN THE WEST

NOVEMBER 17
BRONCOS 17....Jets 13
NOVEMBER 20
RAVENS 31....Bengals 24
BROWNS 14....Jaguars 10
LIONS 49....Panthers 35
PACKERS 35....Buccaneers 26
DOLPHINS 35....Bills 8
Raiders 27....VIKINGS 21
Cowboys 27....REDSKINS 24 (OT)
Seahawks 24....RAMS 7
49ERS 23....Cardinals 7
BEARS 31....Chargers 20
FALCONS 23....Titans 17
Eagles 17....GIANTS 10
NOVEMBER 21
PATRIOTS 34....Chiefs 3
Byes: Colts, Saints, Steelers, Texans

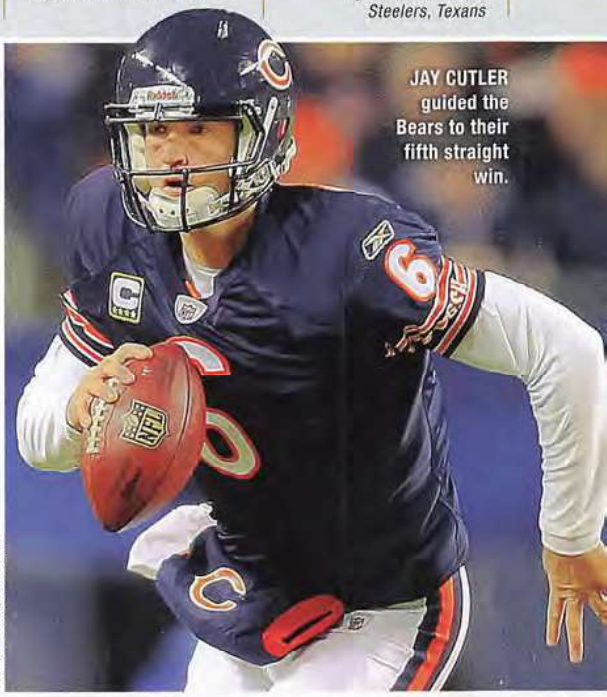
All four AFC West teams harbored title hopes as they geared up for what figured to be a roller coaster stretch run. For now, it was the Raiders—seeking their first division crown since 2002—perched at the top.

Oakland maintained its one-game lead by beating Minnesota, 27-21, taking control with two quick touchdowns just before halftime. Michael Bush scored on a 2-yard run, and on the ensuing kickoff, the Raiders pounced on a fumble deep in Vikings territory. Carson Palmer then capped a short drive with a 1-yard quarterback sneak that gave his team a 17-point lead heading into the locker room.

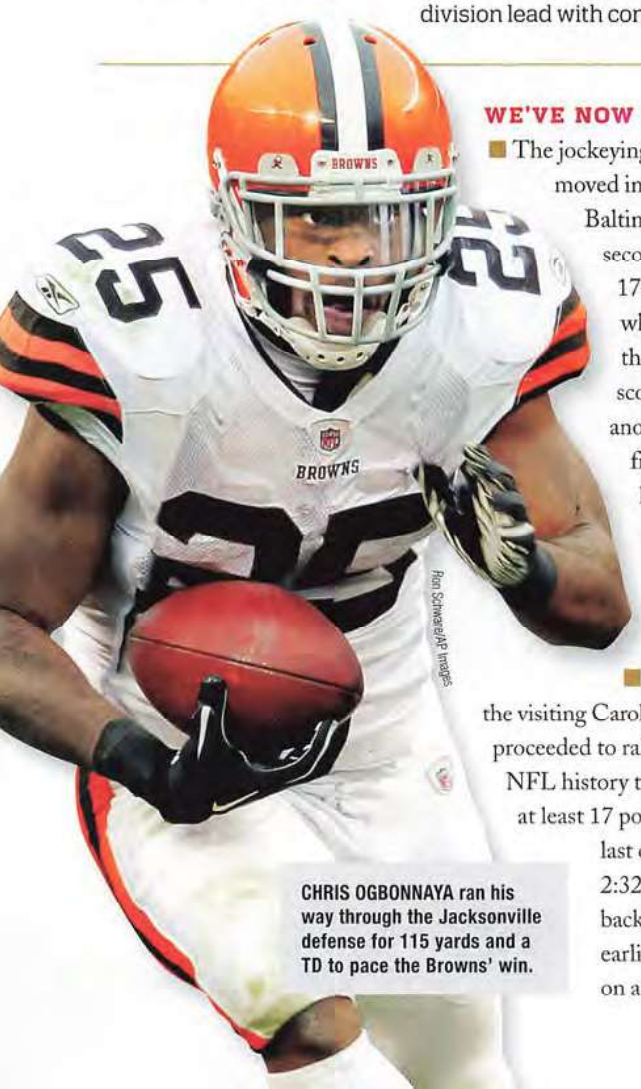
"We continue to battle, and what I really love about my football team is they won't quit," said first-year Oakland head coach Hue Jackson, whose defense held off their hosts by grabbing three interceptions and recovering two fumbles.

The Raiders took the field with no margin for error after Denver squeezed past the Jets, 17-13, on Thursday night. With his team trailing by three late in the game, Tim Tebow engineered a 95-yard march that he finished by getting around a blitz and sprinting 20 yards for the go-ahead touchdown. Andre' Goodman accounted for the Broncos' other TD with a 26-yard interception return in the third quarter.

Although San Diego and Kansas City lost on the weekend, they were just two games out of the division lead with contests left against both teams in front of them.


JAY CUTLER guided the Bears to their fifth straight win.

Dennis Wierzbicki/US Presswire

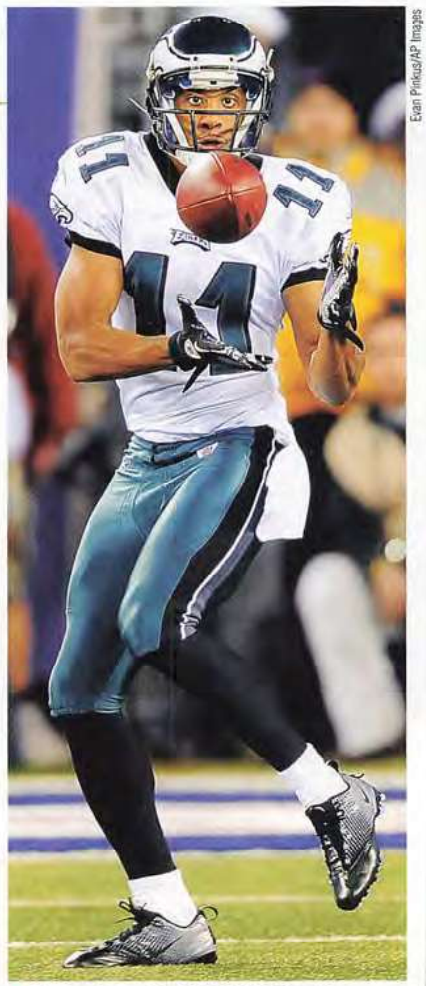

CHRIS OGBONNAYA ran his way through the Jacksonville defense for 115 yards and a TD to pace the Browns' win.

Ron Schwane/AP Images

WE'VE NOW GONE TO 11

The jockeying continued in the AFC North, where the Ravens moved into a first-place tie by holding off Cincinnati, 31-24. Baltimore appeared in firm control after Joe Flacco's second touchdown pass of the day gave his team a 17-point fourth-quarter lead, but Andy Dalton—who led all Week 11 passers with 373 yards—pulled the Bengals back into contention with a 49-yard scoring strike to Andre Caldwell and then directing another drive that ended with Mike Nugent's 27-yard field goal. Cincinnati would reach the Ravens' 7-yard line in the final minute, but were stopped following an intentional grounding call and defensive end Pernell McPhee's fourth-down sack. The Ravens and idle Pittsburgh owned identical 7-3 marks, with Cincinnati a game behind at 6-4.

Trailing 24-7 in the second quarter, the Lions had the visiting Carolina Panthers right where they wanted them. Detroit proceeded to rally for a 49-35 victory, becoming the first team in NFL history to win three games in a season that it had trailed by at least 17 points. Matthew Stafford threw five TD passes, the last of those a 7-yarder to Brandon Pettigrew with 2:32 to play that put the Lions ahead for good. Running back Kevin Smith, re-signed by Detroit two weeks earlier, rushed for 140 yards and scored three times—on a 28-yard catch and on runs of 4 and 19 yards.


▲ The Eagles and STEVE SMITH slipped past the Giants, 17-10, on Sunday night.

Evan Pinkus/AP Images

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(s11)

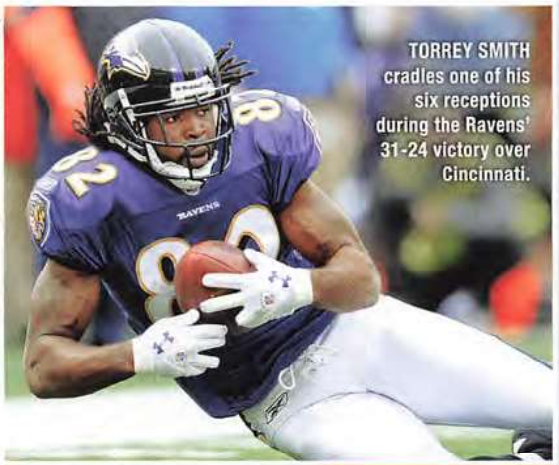
■ Green Bay took the measure of Tampa Bay, 35-26, improving to 10-0 for the third time in franchise history. The 2011 Packers joined their 1929 and 1962 counterparts, which both went on to win NFL titles. With his team nursing a two-point lead, Aaron Rodgers (23 of 34, 299 yards, 3 TDs) ended the Buccaneers' upset hopes by tossing a 40-yard scoring pass to Jordy Nelson with 2:55 remaining. The duo had earlier hooked up for a 5-yard touchdown.

■ After the Packers, the league's longest winning streaks belonged to the 49ers (eight games) and the Bears (five games). For San Francisco, Alex Smith threw for 267 yards while its defense produced five turnovers in a 23-7 win over the Cardinals. The Bears, meanwhile, earned a 31-20 victory over San Diego, with Jay Cutler throwing for two touchdowns and running for another.

■ Miami won for the third straight week, this time a convincing 35-8 decision over the Bills, aided by a defense that extended its streak of not allowing a touchdown to 12 quarters. QB Matt Moore hit Anthony Fasano, Charles Clay, and Davone Bess for first-half touchdowns, while the Dolphins' final score came when Lex Hilliard recovered a blocked punt in the end zone.

■ Vince Young led a fourth-quarter drive that covered 18 plays and 80 yards as the Eagles edged the Giants, 17-10. Philadelphia converted four third-downs on the march, which lasted 8:51 and ended with Riley Cooper's 8-yard touchdown catch. New York did drive to the Eagles' 21-yard line in the final minute, but that's where defensive end Jason Babin forced a fumble that teammate Derek Landri recovered to secure the victory.

■ Dallas beat the Redskins, 27-24, in overtime. Tony Romo threw for 292 yards and three TDs, among them a 59-yarder to Jason Witten. In OT, Romo's 26-yard completion to Dez Bryant set up Dan Bailey's game-winning 39-yard field goal.

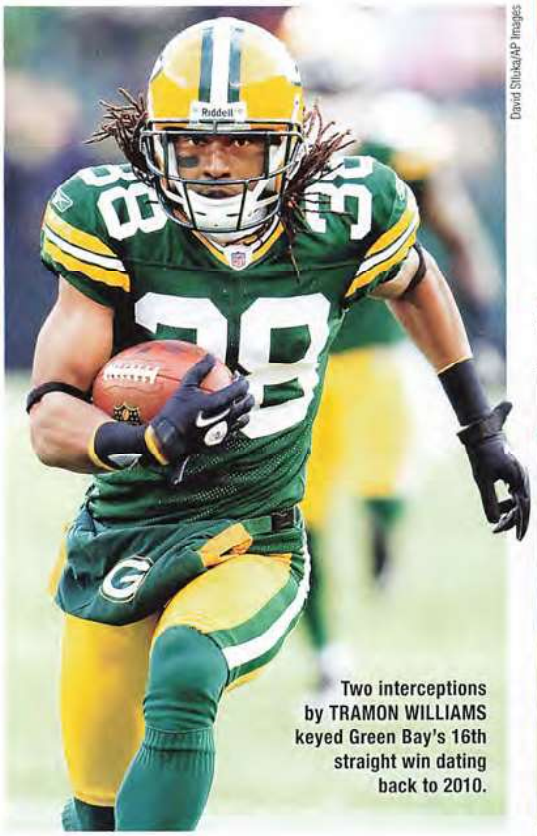


Nick Wass/AP Images

TORREY SMITH cradles one of his six receptions during the Ravens' 31-24 victory over Cincinnati.

Robert Mayer/US Presswire

▲ LEX HILLIARD secures the ball after recovering a blocked punt that put an exclamation point on the Dolphins' triumph.



David Stluka/AP Images

Two interceptions by TRAMON WILLIAMS keyed Green Bay's 16th straight win dating back to 2010.

Week 11: PLAYER AWARDS

AFC

OFFENSE
Torrey Smith *WR, Ravens*
Averaged 27.5 yards on his six receptions, which included a 38-yard touchdown grab, in win over Cincinnati.

DEFENSE
Von Miller *LB, Broncos*
In prime-time triumph over Jets, contributed 10 tackles, 1.5 sacks, three tackles for loss, one forced fumble, and one pass defensed.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Julian Edelman *PR-WR, Patriots*
Helped break open game vs. Chiefs with a 72-yard punt-return TD – the second of his career – early in the third quarter.

NFC

OFFENSE
Kevin Smith *RB, Lions*
Became first Lions running back to win weekly honor since Barry Sanders in 1997 by rushing for 140 yards with two TDs and adding four catches, including a scoring grab, to spark comeback win over Carolina.

DEFENSE
Chris Clemons *DE, Seahawks*
As part of a defense that yielded only 185 yards in victory over Rams, had five tackles, three sacks, and two forced fumbles – one that led to a key third-quarter TD.

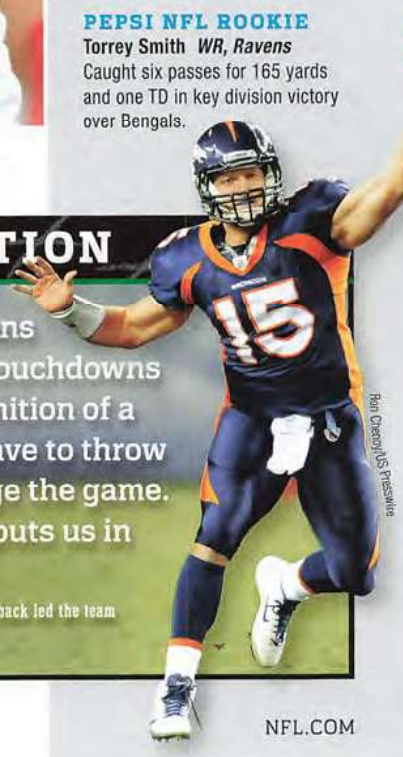
SPECIAL TEAMS
Kealoha Pilares *KR, Panthers*
Set record for longest touchdown in franchise history, bringing back a kickoff 101 yards for a score in contest vs. Lions.

PEPSI NFL ROOKIE
Torrey Smith *WR, Ravens*
Caught six passes for 165 yards and one TD in key division victory over Bengals.

DEFYING DESCRIPTION

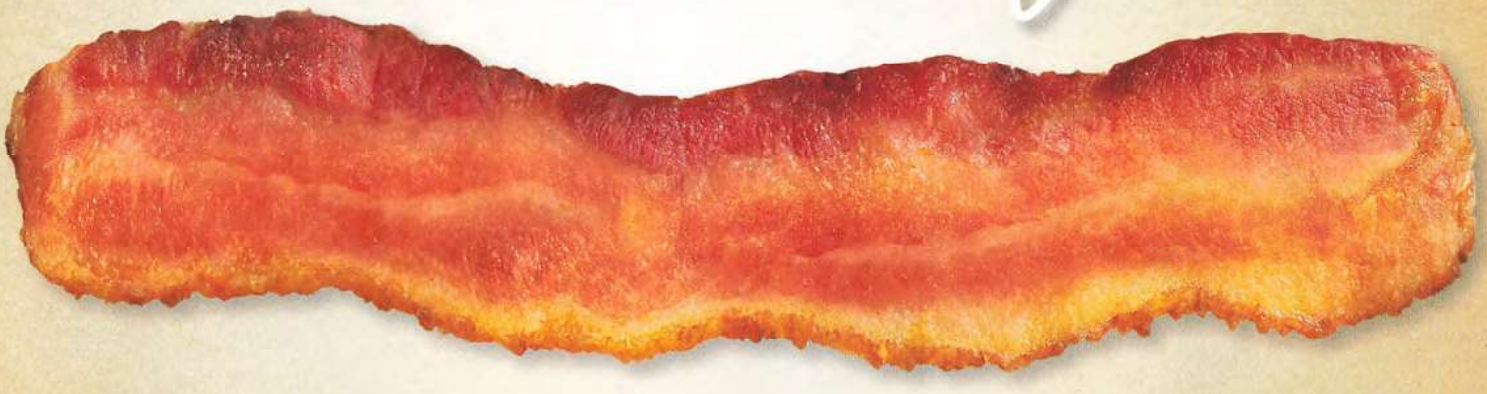
"No matter how many interceptions he throws, no matter how many touchdowns he scores, he's the man. The definition of a quarterback doesn't mean you have to throw for 400 yards a game. Just manage the game. [He] manages the game well and puts us in great situations to win."

~Broncos LB Von Miller, describing Tim Tebow (right) after the quarterback led the team to a late victory over the Jets.



Ron Chenoy/US Presswire

"I'M LIKE MEAT CANDY."



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Week 12: SWEET SERVINGS

NOVEMBER 24
Packers 27....LIONS 15
COWBOYS 20....Dolphins 19
RAVENS 16....49ers 6

NOVEMBER 27
FALCONS 24....Vikings 14
BENGALS 23....Browns 20
Panthers 27....COLTS 19
Texans 20....JAGUARS 13
JETS 28....Bills 24
Cardinals 23....RAMS 20
TITANS 23....Buccaneers 17
RAIDERS 25....Bears 20
Redskins 23....SEAHAWKS 17
Patriots 38....EAGLES 20
Broncos 16....CHARGERS 13 (OT)
Steelers 13....CHIEFS 9

NOVEMBER 28
SAINTS 49....Giants 24

Beginning with a suspense-laden Thanksgiving Day tripleheader that showcased four division leaders, Week 12 dished out a full plate of excitement trimmed with fantastic finishes.

NFC North rivals Green Bay and Detroit opened the holiday festivities, with the Packers beating their hosts, 27-15, to improve to 11-0. After a tight first half, Green Bay seized control by scoring on three straight third-quarter possessions. John Kuhn capped an 11-play drive with a 1-yard TD run, and Rob Francois followed with an interception that set up Aaron Rodgers' 65-yard scoring strike to James Jones. Mason Crosby then kicked a 35-yard field goal to extend the lead to 24-0.

But when the postgame conversation turned to a possible "perfect" season, Rodgers put it on the back burner. "We're a long way from there," he said. "This [game] is a big step toward our first goal, which is winning the division. If we're undefeated after 14 or 15 games, we'll talk about 16."

The action moved on to Dallas, where the NFC East leaders edged Miami in the final seconds to snap the Dolphins' three-game winning streak. Tony Romo, who had earlier thrown two touchdown passes, marched the Cowboys 54 yards as the clock counted down, positioning Dan Bailey for a 28-yard field goal that produced the 20-19 win.

Football history was made in the nightcap when San Francisco played at Baltimore. For the first time, two brothers coached against each other in an NFL game. John Harbaugh's Ravens came out on top over Jim's 49ers, 16-6, the product of a franchise record-tying nine sacks and Joe Flacco's go-ahead 8-yard TD pass to Dennis Pitta early in the fourth quarter.

Cal Sport Media/AP Images

▲ **RODDY WHITE hauls in a touchdown for one of his 10 catches vs. Minnesota.**

David Kohl/AP Images

Bengals quarterback ANDY DALTON continued to impress, rallying his team past the Browns.

NOTABLES FROM A NOVEMBER WEEKEND

■ Six teams raced back from fourth-quarter deficits to prevail in Week 12, including the Jets, Broncos, and Titans, who each moved above the .500 mark and solidified their place in the AFC playoff fray. New York upended the Bills, 28-24, the decisive points coming on Mark Sanchez's 16-yard touchdown to Santonio Holmes with just 1:01 remaining. Denver took down the Chargers in overtime, 16-13. After directing a game-tying field goal drive at the end of regulation, Tim Tebow engineered another march late in the extra period that ended with Matt Prater's game-winning 37-yard field goal. Tennessee, meanwhile, tripped up Tampa Bay, 23-17. Trailing by seven points heading into the final period, the Titans sandwiched two Rob Bironas field goals around Matt Hasselbeck's go-ahead scoring toss to Damian Williams with three minutes remaining.

■ A.J. Green's 51-yard reception set up Mike Nugent's third field goal of the game, a 26-yarder with under a minute to play that lifted Cincinnati over Cleveland, 23-20.

Tim Heitman/US Presswire

▲ **Cowboys head coach JASON GARRETT was thankful for a late field goal that beat Miami.**

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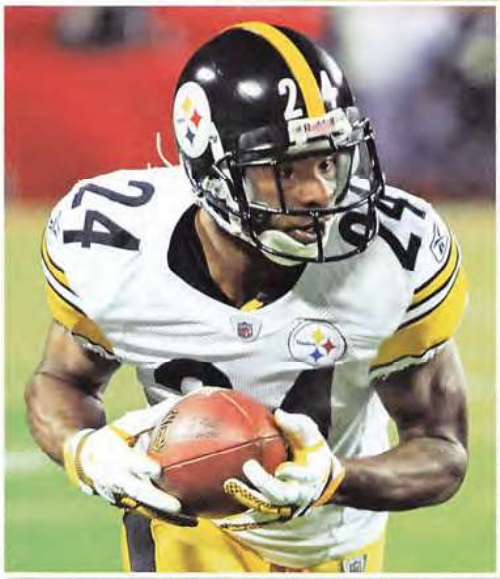
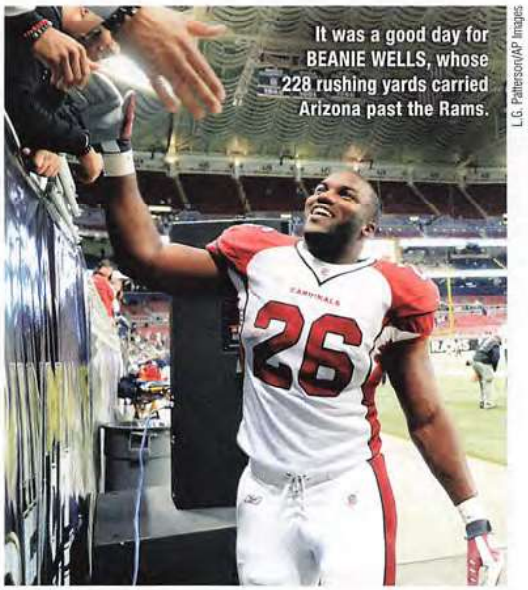
The Saints' JIMMY GRAHAM cracks the goal line with one of his two scoring receptions in a 49-24 win over the Giants.

Derick E. Hingle/US Presswire



John Rieger/US Presswire

▲ Steelers fans had to like the play of IKE TAYLOR, who had an interception that led to early points against the Chiefs.



It was a good day for BEANIE WELLS, whose 228 rushing yards carried Arizona past the Rams.

L.G. Patterson/AP Images

The Bengals were faced with a 10-point third-quarter deficit, but inched closer on Andy Dalton's 22-yard TD pass to Jermaine Gresham and tied things up on a 40-yard Nugent field goal. It marked the third double-digit comeback win for Cincinnati, which improved to 7-4, one game behind AFC North co-leaders Baltimore and Pittsburgh.

■ The Patriots spotted the Eagles an early 10-point lead before swarming back for a 38-20 victory to stay two games ahead in the AFC East. Wes Welker and Deion Branch each topped 100 receiving yards, with Welker collecting TDs of 41 and nine yards among his eight catches. BenJarvus Green-Ellis also scored twice, including a 1-yard run early in the second quarter that put New England ahead for good.

■ The Cardinals' Patrick Peterson tied an NFL record with his fourth punt-return touchdown of the season, bringing back a kick 80 yards for a score during his team's 23-20 win over St. Louis. The contest's first points came when the Rams' Nick Miller returned a punt 88 yards for a TD, making this the first game in league history in which both teams had 80+ yard punt-return touchdowns.

■ The Saints' offense hit the accelerator in a 49-24 victory over the Giants. Drew Brees threw for 363 yards and four touchdowns—two each to Jimmy Graham and Lance Moore—and also ran for a score as New Orleans (8-3) remained a game ahead of Atlanta in the NFC South.

Week 12: PLAYER AWARDS

AFC

OFFENSE
Chris Johnson *RB, Titans*
Rushed for 190 yards—his 27th career 100-yard game and his third with at least 190 yards—in victory over Tampa Bay.

DEFENSE
Terrell Suggs *LB, Ravens*
Contributed three sacks, three tackles, and one forced fumble to lead a defensive charge that limited 49ers to 170 total yards.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Sebastian Janikowski *K, Raiders*
Connected on six field goals, five of those from 35 yards or longer, and accounted for 19 of team's 25 points in win over Bears.

NFC

OFFENSE
Drew Brees *QB, Saints*
Directed four TD drives of 80 yards or longer and tied league mark by posting 27th game with at least 350 yards passing in win over Giants.

DEFENSE
DeAngelo Hall *CB, Redskins*
Against Seattle, notched six passes defensed, five tackles, and sealed the outcome with an interception in the final minute of play.

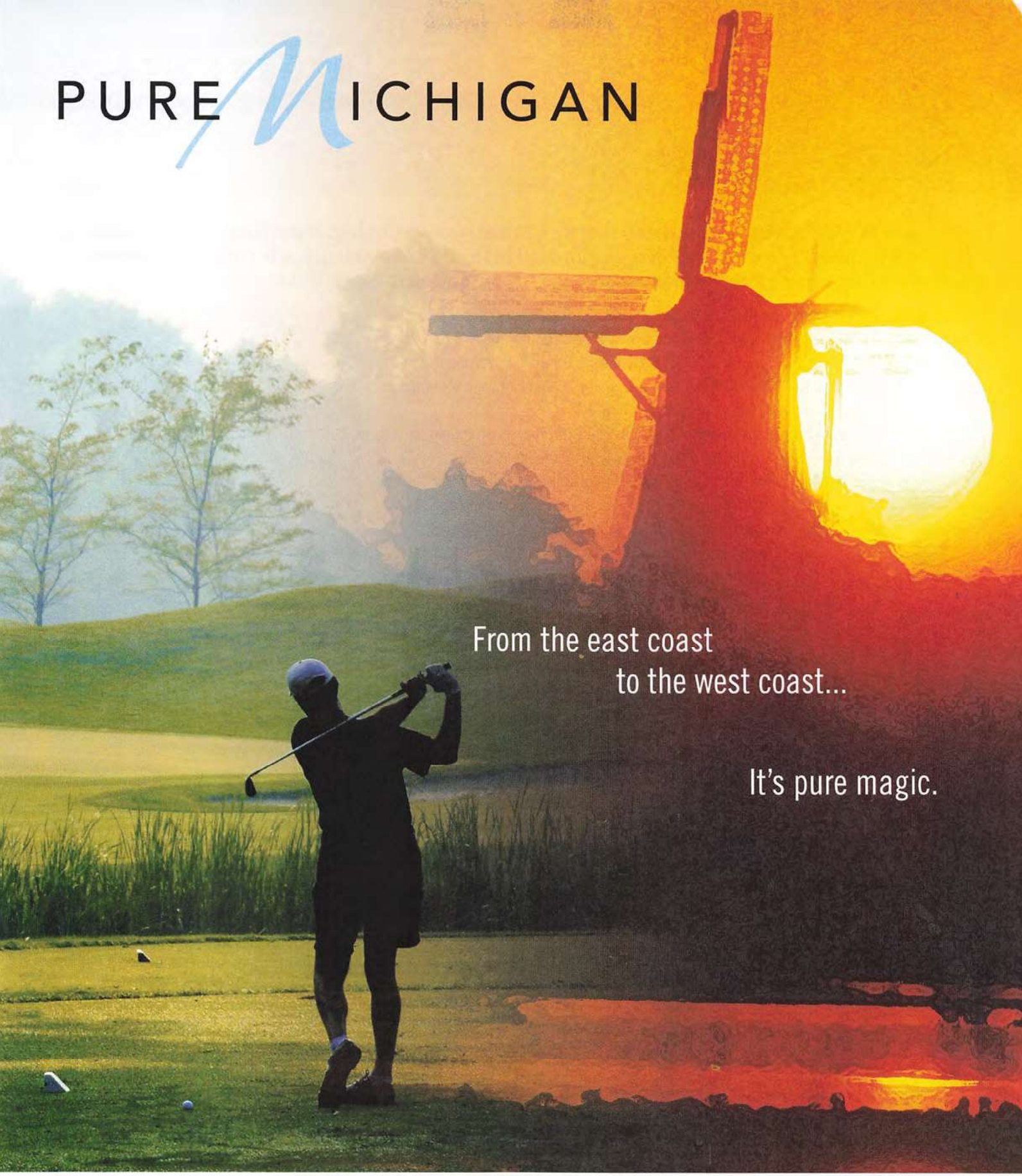
SPECIAL TEAMS
Patrick Peterson
PR-CB, Cardinals
In win over Rams, recorded fourth punt-return TD of career (on just his 31st return) and became one of six players in NFL history with four punt-return TDs of at least 80 yards.

PEPSI NFL ROOKIE
Andy Dalton *QB, Bengals*
Completed 67.7 percent of his passes for 270 yards and a TD—and added 23 yards rushing—in victory over Cleveland.

NO PROBLEM, HOUSTON

Tom DiPace/AP Images

Battling to reach the playoffs for the first time in franchise history, injuries were forcing the Texans to tap deep into their resources. So far, so good. Despite being down to their third-string quarterback, they rattled off their fifth straight win, 20-13 over the Jaguars, to keep a two-game lead in the AFC South. Starting QB Matt Schaub hurt his foot in Week 10 and replacement Matt Leinart was sidelined in the first half of this one with a shoulder injury. "If there's one thing that this team knows how to do, it's deal with adversity," said rookie T.J. Yates, who replaced Leinart and completed 8 of 15 passes. "We've taken an injury in almost every game, [but have] rallied around each other and found a way to win." Helping the cause was a solid ground game and an improving defense. Arian Foster scored on a 1-yard run—his fifth straight game with a rushing TD—while the defense piled up seven sacks, four of those by Connor Barwin (right).



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Week 13: FIRST RESPONDERS

DECEMBER 1
SEAHAWKS 31....Eagles 14
DECEMBER 4
Titans 23....BILLS 17
Chiefs 10....BEARS 3
TEXANS 17....Falcons 10
DOLPHINS 34....Raiders 14
STEELERS 35....Bengals 7
Panthers 38....BUCCANEERS 19
Jets 34....REDSKINS 19
Broncos 35....VIKINGS 32
PATRIOTS 31....Colts 24
Ravens 24....BROWNS 10
CARDINALS 19....Cowboys 13 (OT)
Packers 38....GIANTS 35
49ERS 26....Rams 0
SAINTS 31....Lions 17
DECEMBER 5
Chargers 38....JAGUARS 14

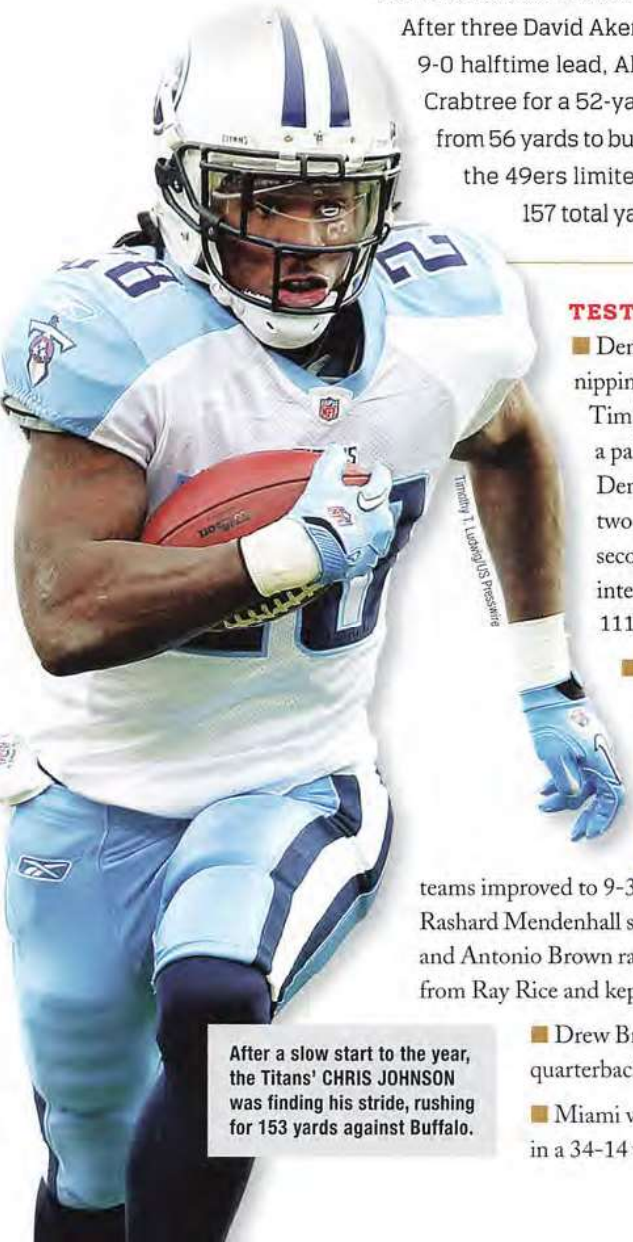
A pair of NFC teams—Green Bay and San Francisco—punched their postseason tickets, while things remained much more jumbled in the AFC. Amazingly, with three-quarters of the season complete, 28 teams remained in contention to reach Super Bowl XLVI.

For the undefeated Packers, the playoffs were inevitable though their result against the Giants remained in doubt until the final whistle. The fast-paced affair seemed to be leaning Green Bay's way after Aaron Rodgers hit Donald Driver for a 7-yard TD that made it 35-27 with 3:34 remaining. But New York struck back, drawing even on Eli Manning's scoring toss to Hakeem Nicks and D.J. Ware's two-point conversion run.

Rodgers, however, had the final answer. He flawlessly led his team on a five-play march culminated by Mason Crosby's 31-yard field goal that produced the 38-35 win.

"I'm running out of things to say about [Rodgers]," said Green Bay coach Mike McCarthy, whose team also locked up the NFC North. "He's a great quarterback. Playing against the pass rush they had tonight, he hung in there and made the plays."

The 49ers secured the NFC West by blanking St. Louis, 26-0. After three David Akers field goals gave San Francisco a 9-0 halftime lead, Alex Smith connected with Michael Crabtree for a 52-yard TD and then with Kyle Williams from 56 yards to bust the game wide open. On defense, the 49ers limited the Rams to 10 first downs and 157 total yards to earn the shutout.


Timothy T. Ludwig/US Presswire

After a slow start to the year, the Titans' CHRIS JOHNSON was finding his stride, rushing for 153 yards against Buffalo.

Steven Bisig/US Presswire

▲ Seattle's BRANDON BROWNER wins a battle for the ball against Eagles wide receiver Riley Cooper.

TESTING THEIR LUCK IN 13

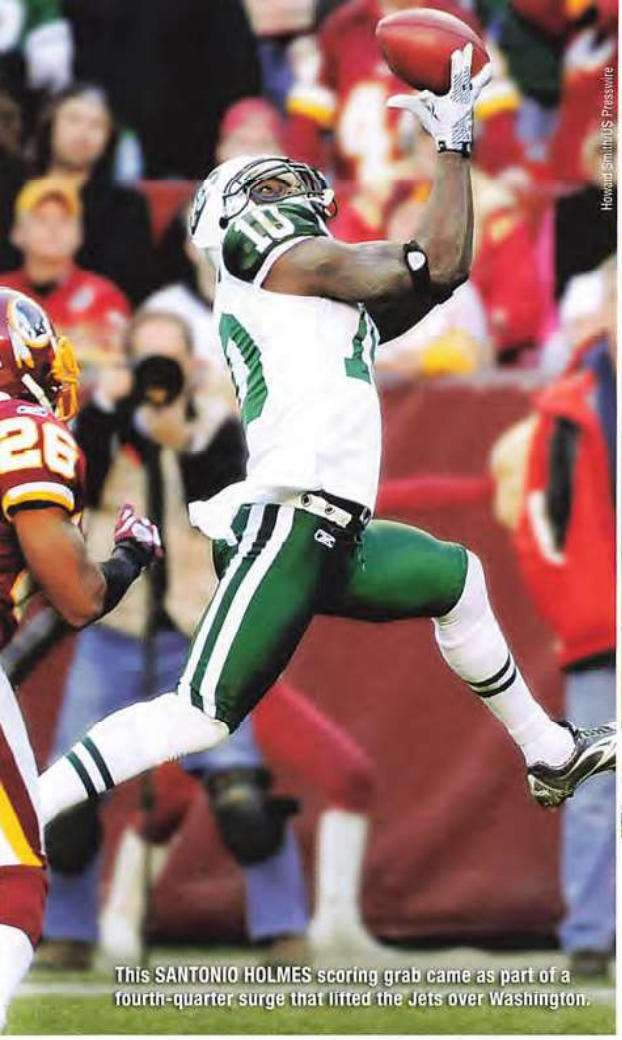
■ Denver won for the fifth straight week, nipping the Vikings on the final play, 35-32. Tim Tebow threw for 202 yards, including a pair of second-half touchdowns to Demaryius Thomas, and Matt Prater hit two field goals in the final 93 seconds, the second one set up by an Andre Goodman interception. Willis McGahee rushed for 111 yards in the victory, which placed the Broncos in a first-place tie in the AFC West.

■ Tight end Rob Gronkowski caught two scoring passes and added his first career rushing touchdown as the AFC East-leading Patriots built a big lead before holding on to defeat the Colts, 31-24. After making 11-yard and 21-yard touchdown receptions, Gronkowski reached the end zone for a third time with a 2-yard run that put his team ahead, 31-3, late in the third quarter.

■ Pittsburgh and Baltimore remained locked at the top of the AFC North as both teams improved to 9-3. The Steelers beat the Bengals, 35-7, bolstered by a huge second quarter that saw Rashard Mendenhall score twice, Ben Roethlisberger fire the first of two touchdown passes to Mike Wallace, and Antonio Brown race 60 yards for a punt-return TD. The Ravens, meanwhile, received 204 rushing yards from Ray Rice and kept the host Browns out of the end zone until the final minutes of their 24-10 triumph.

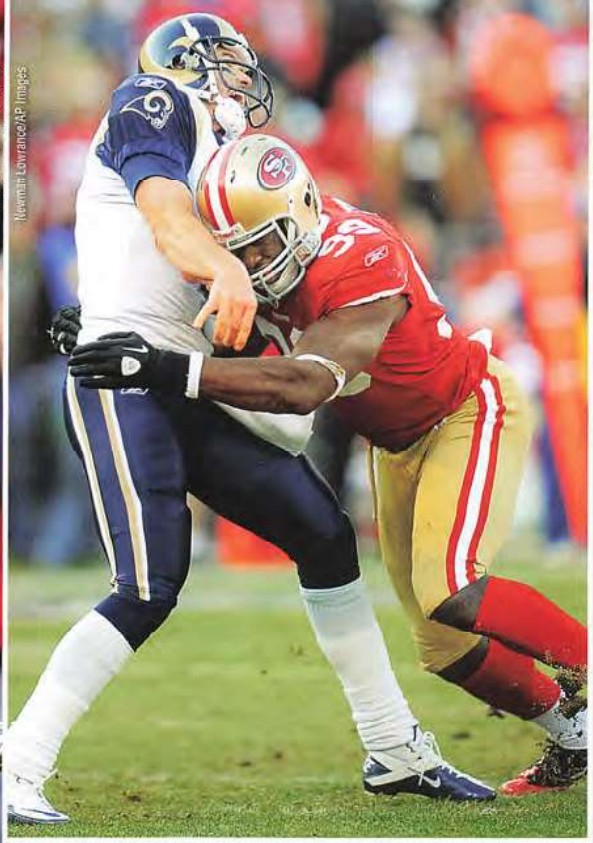
■ Drew Brees threw for 342 yards in the Saints' 31-17 win over Detroit, making him the first quarterback in NFL history to reach 4,000 passing yards in his team's first 12 games.

■ Miami won for the fourth time in five games, with Matt Moore passing and running for TDs in a 34-14 victory over the Raiders. The quarterback connected with Davone Bess from 12 yards



Howard Smith/US Presswire

This SANTONIO HOLMES scoring grab came as part of a fourth-quarter surge that lifted the Jets over Washington.



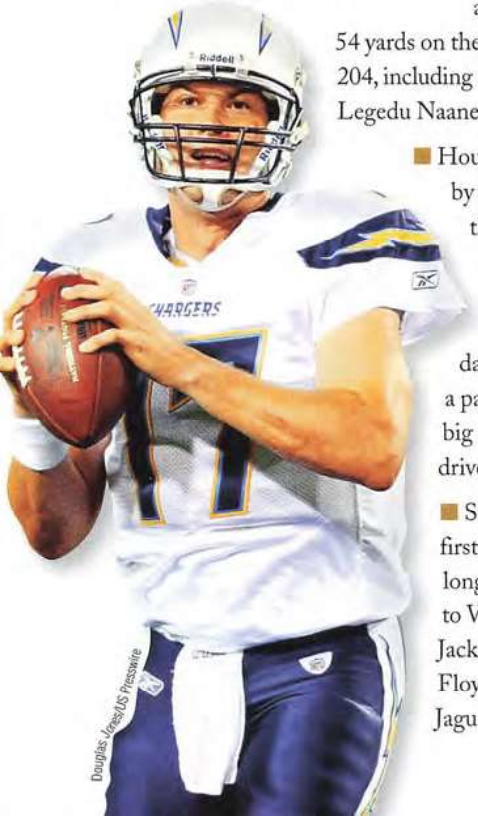
Newman Lowrance/AP Images

▲ ALDON SMITH puts a hit on A.J. Feeley during the 49ers' shutout of the Rams that wrapped up their first NFC West title since 2002.

out for the Dolphins' first touchdown and later hit paydirt on a 6-yard run during the team's 21-point third-quarter outburst.

■ Cam Newton rushed for three touchdowns in the Panthers' 38-19 victory at Tampa Bay, giving him 13 on the year and surpassing former Patriot Steve Grogan for the most rushing TDs by a quarterback in a season. Newton finished with 54 yards on the ground and threw for another 204, including a second-quarter scoring strike to Legedu Naanee that gave Carolina a 21-6 lead.

▼ PHILIP RIVERS (22 of 28, 294 yards, 3 TDs) went deep in the Chargers' win.



Douglas Jones/US Presswire

■ Houston won its sixth straight game by edging Atlanta, 17-10. T.J. Yates threw a TD pass to Joel Dreessen, and Arian Foster broke a fourth-quarter tie with a 1-yard run as part of his 111-yard rushing day. Defensively, the Texans snared a pair of interceptions and came up big at the end, stopping two Falcons drives deep into their territory.

■ San Diego scored on five of its first six possessions—highlighted by long TD passes from Philip Rivers to Vincent Brown (22 yards), Vincent Jackson (35 yards), and Malcom Floyd (52 yards)—to coast past the Jaguars, 38-14.

Paul Spinelli/AP Images

▲ Ravens head coach JOHN HARBAUGH applauds his team's effort at Cleveland.

Week 13: PLAYER AWARDS

AFC

OFFENSE

Ray Rice *RB, Ravens*
Became third player in franchise history—joining Priest Holmes and Jamal Lewis—to rush for 200 yards in a game, totaling 204 and scoring once in division win at Cleveland.

DEFENSE

Colin McCarthy *LB, Titans*
Recovered two fumbles that led to 10 points and topped team with nine tackles in win over Bills.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Antonio Brown *PR-WR, Steelers*
Returned a punt 60 yards for a TD as part of a special teams effort vs. Bengals that included a blocked FG and fumble recovery on a kickoff.

NFC

OFFENSE

Cam Newton *QB, Panthers*
Was a triple threat in triumph over Tampa Bay, throwing for 204 yards and one TD, rushing for another 54 yards and three scores, and catching a 27-yard pass.

DEFENSE

David Hawthorne *LB, Seahawks*
Made six tackles and iced win over Eagles with a 77-yard interception return for a touchdown.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Tim Masthay *P, Packers*
Averaged 44.2 yards per punt while placing four of his five kicks inside the 20-yard line to help beat Giants.

PEPSI NFL ROOKIE

Colin McCarthy *LB, Titans*
Nine tackles, two fumble recoveries, one forced fumble, and one pass defensed in defeat of Bills.

STANDINGS (12.06.11)

AFC EAST	W-L-T	PF	PA
Patriots	9-3-0	362	247
Jets	7-5-0	290	260
Bills	5-7-0	278	304
Dolphins	4-8-0	246	220
AFC NORTH	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Ravens	9-3-0	296	192
Steelers	9-3-0	268	195
Bengals	7-5-0	266	250
Browns	4-8-0	175	240
AFC SOUTH	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Texans	9-3-0	310	189
Titans	7-5-0	249	229
Jaguars	3-9-0	152	238
Colts	0-12-0	174	358
AFC WEST	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Broncos	7-5-0	256	292
Raiders	7-5-0	274	308
Chargers	5-7-0	287	289
Chiefs	5-7-0	163	268

NFC EAST	W-L-T	PF	PA
Cowboys	7-5-0	283	244
Giants	6-6-0	287	315
Eagles	4-8-0	271	282
Redskins	4-8-0	202	256
NFC NORTH	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Packers*	12-0-0	420	262
Bears	7-5-0	291	242
Lions	7-5-0	333	277
Vikings	2-10-0	246	330
NFC SOUTH	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Saints	9-3-0	393	269
Falcons	7-5-0	269	244
Buccaneers	4-8-0	218	329
Panthers	4-8-0	290	324
NFC WEST	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
49ers*	10-2-0	288	161
Seahawks	5-7-0	216	246
Cardinals	5-7-0	232	269
Rams	2-10-0	140	296

*clinched division title

Week 14: WEEKEND OF WOW

DECEMBER 8
STEELERS 14....Browns 3
DECEMBER 11
RAVENS 24....Colts 10
Falcons 31....PANTHERS 23
Texans 20....BENGALS 19
LIONS 34....Vikings 28
JAGUARS 41....Buccaneers 14
Eagles 26....DOLPHINS 10
JETS 37....Chiefs 10
Saints 22....TITANS 17
Patriots 34....REDSKINS 27
CARDINALS 21....49ers 19
BRONCOS 13....Bears 10 (OT)
CHARGERS 37....Bills 10
PACKERS 46....Raiders 16
Giants 37....COWBOYS 34
DECEMBER 12
SEAHAWKS 30....Rams 13

From another shocking overtime win by the Broncos to frenzied finishes in five other games—including one that locked up the Texans' first playoff berth—it was a wild weekend in the NFL.

Houston nipped Cincinnati with a madcap drive culminated by T.J. Yates' 6-yard touchdown pass to Kevin Walter in the final seconds. The 20-19 victory was the Texans' seventh straight win and helped lock up the AFC South title.

"It's pretty crazy," said Yates, who marched his team 80 yards in 13 plays without the aid of a timeout. "A lot of people in this organization have waited a long time for this. This is a special day for this team."

The Texans had trailed, 16-3, at intermission but their defense allowed only 81 yards the rest of the way and swung the game's momentum early in the third quarter with a sack that produced a fumble at the Bengals' 17. Four plays later, Yates fired a 6-yard TD to tight end Joel Dreessen. The teams then traded field goals until that final drive.

Denver, meanwhile, added to its list of improbable victories, beating the Bears in overtime, 13-10. After being kept off the scoreboard for nearly 58 minutes, Tim Tebow fired a 10-yard touchdown pass to Demaryius Thomas, and Matt Prater drew the Broncos even with a 59-yard field goal in the waning seconds. In the extra session, Elvis Dumervil's fumble recovery set up Prater's game-winner from 51 yards away.

It was the Broncos' sixth straight victory and placed them one game ahead of Oakland in the AFC West.

Tim Fuller/US Presswire

ALPHONSO SMITH was part of the Lions' fast start against Minnesota, returning an interception for a TD.

Paul Connors/AP Images

Arizona's LARRY FITZGERALD helped foil the 49ers, making seven catches for 149 yards, one of those for a touchdown.

DECEMBER DOINGS

■ It took until the fourth quarter, but Drew Brees threw a touchdown pass for the 40th straight game, keying the Saints' 22-17 victory over the Titans. New Orleans was behind, 10-9, until Brees connected with Marques Colston on TD tosses of 35 and 28 yards as part of his 337-yard day. But Tennessee answered with a touchdown of its own and then had a pair of golden scoring opportunities in the closing minutes—first reaching the Saints' 24-yard line before being stopped on downs and then getting all the way to the 5, where linebacker Jo-Lonn Dunbar sacked Jake Locker as time expired.

■ Rob Gronkowski set an NFL single-season record for touchdown catches by a tight end as the Patriots edged Washington, 34-27. With his 14th and 15th scoring grabs of the year, Gronkowski moved past Antonio Gates (2004) and Vernon Davis (2009), who had shared the mark of 13. Still, the game was tied late in the third quarter when Tom Brady (22 of 37, 357 yards) found Wes Welker open for a 24-yard TD, and New England escaped a final threat when Jerod Mayo intercepted a pass at the 5-yard line with 22 seconds remaining. The AFC East leaders became just the third team to reach double figures in wins in nine consecutive seasons.

■ Matt Ryan rallied the Falcons from 16 points down to defeat the Panthers, 31-23. Trailing big at the half, Atlanta scored 24 unanswered points, moving in front early in the fourth quarter on Ryan's 17-yard TD throw to Julio Jones. After

Bruce Kluckhohn/US Presswire

Extra effort again ▶ paid off for JOHN FOX and the Broncos, who won their third overtime game of the season.

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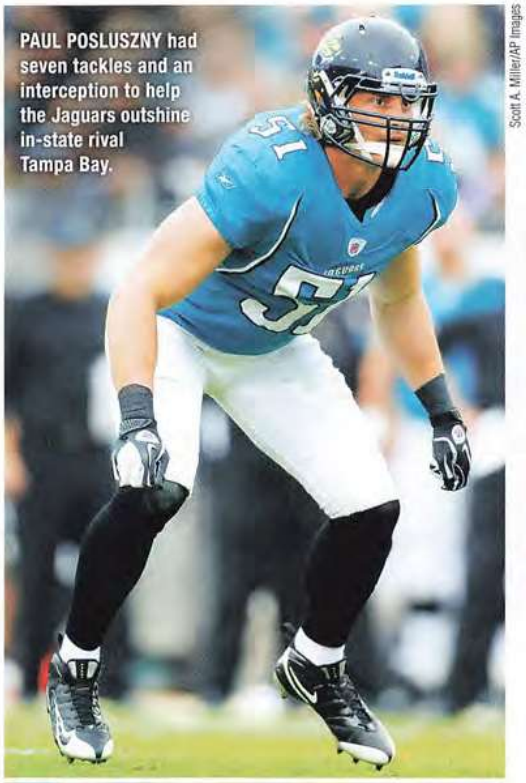
Jones hauled in a 75-yard scoring catch to push the lead to eight points, the Falcons' defense stopped Carolina on downs and Ryan was able to run out the game's final 3:31.

■ Detroit twice built big leads before holding off the Vikings, 34-28. Matthew Stafford fired a pair of first-quarter touchdown passes and Alphonso Smith brought back one of his two interceptions 30 yards for another score that put the Lions in front, 28-7. Minnesota crept back into contention when Joe Webb ran 65 yards for a TD and Toby Gerhart caught a short scoring pass. The Vikings then reached the 1-yard line in the final seconds before Detroit's DeAndre Levy forced a fumble that teammate Cliff Avril recovered to end the game.

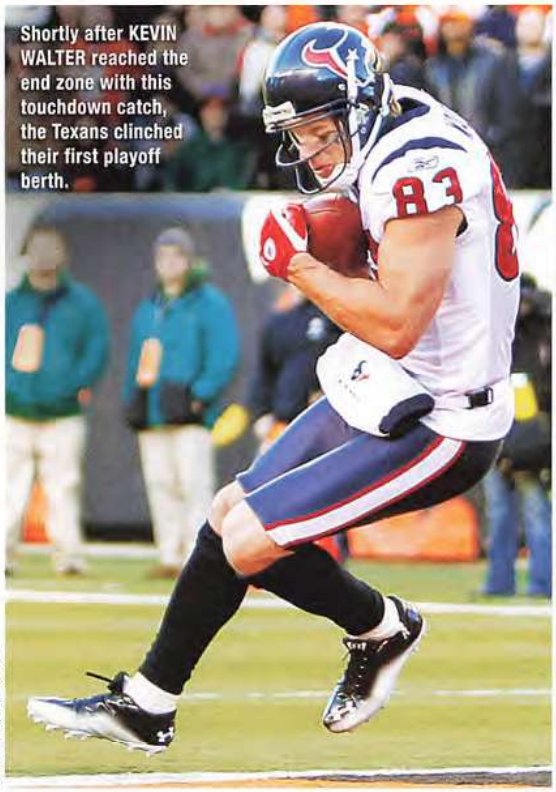
■ Green Bay won for the 19th straight time—the second-longest streak in NFL history—with a 46-16 win over the Raiders. Aaron Rodgers was his usual self, throwing for 281 yards and two TDs, but the Packers' defense also impressed, intercepting four passes and getting into the end zone on a 5-yard fumble return by linebacker Erik Walden.

■ Ben Roethlisberger's 79-yard TD pass to Antonio Brown with less than three minutes remaining clinched the Steelers' eighth win in nine games, 14-3 over Cleveland. While the victory temporarily put Pittsburgh in first in the AFC North, the Ravens answered back by beating the Colts, 24-10. Ray Rice rushed for 103 yards, while Baltimore's defense yielded just 154 yards and didn't allow Indianapolis into the end zone until the game's final play.



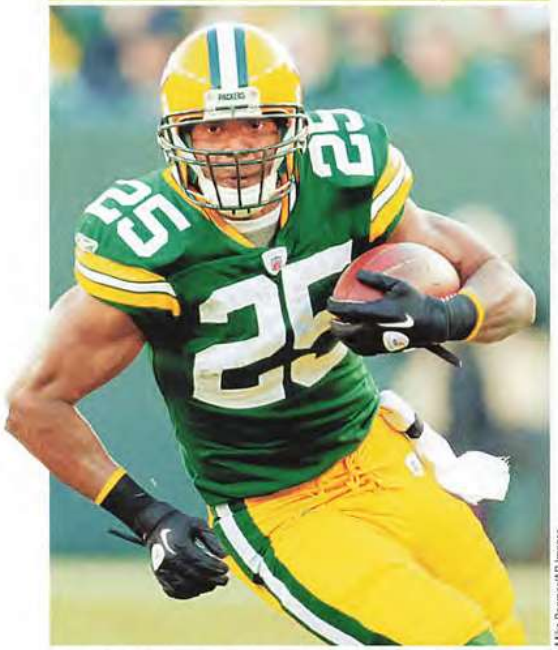
PAUL POSLUSZNY had seven tackles and an interception to help the Jaguars outshine in-state rival Tampa Bay.

Scott A. Miller/AP Images



Shortly after KEVIN WALTER reached the end zone with this touchdown catch, the Texans clinched their first playoff berth.

Frank Victores/US Presswire



Mike Roemer/AP Images

▲ RYAN GRANT rushed for two touchdowns as the Packers moved a step closer to a perfect season by beating Oakland.

Week 14: PLAYER AWARDS

OFFENSE

Rob Gronkowski *TE, Patriots*
His 160 receiving yards (on six catches) in win over Redskins were the most by an NFL tight end in more than two seasons.

DEFENSE

Terrell Suggs *LB, Ravens*
Dominant effort against Colts with five tackles, three sacks – giving him an AFC-leading 13 on the year – and three forced fumbles.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Matt Prater *K, Broncos*
Made two clutch field goals against Bears, hitting from 59 yards to force overtime and then kicking a 51-yarder to give Denver its sixth straight win.

OFFENSE

Matt Ryan *QB, Falcons*
Posted a 120.5 passer rating while throwing for 320 yards and four TDs, and engineered a second-half comeback to defeat Panthers.

DEFENSE

Jason Pierre-Paul *DE, Giants*
In addition to having eight tackles, two sacks, and a forced fumble, blocked game-tying field goal attempt to clinch victory at Dallas.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Doug Baldwin *ST-WR, Seahawks*
Key contributor in win over Rams, blocking a punt that was returned for game's first touchdown, bringing back a kickoff 37 yards, and later downing a punt at the 6-yard line.

PEPSI NFL ROOKIE

T.J. Yates *QB, Texans*
Completed 26 of 44 passes for 300 yards and a pair of TDs, and added 36 rushing yards, to lead win over Bengals.

PRIME-TIME TWISTS

The battle for control of the NFC East turned dramatically in a Sunday night showdown between the Giants and Cowboys. Dallas appeared on its way to victory–and a two-game division lead–after Tony Romo's TD pass to Dez Bryant gave his team a 12-point cushion with barely five minutes to play. But New York rallied behind Eli Manning (right). The quarterback directed late touchdown drives of 80 and 56 yards that put the Giants in front, 37-34, a lead that stood up when Jason Pierre-Paul blocked what would have been a game-tying field goal as time expired. Manning finished the game with 400 yards passing. "We needed to have a locker room celebration," said Giants head coach Tom Coughlin. "We were starving for this." With the triumph, New York improved to 7-6, all but one of its victories the product of a fourth-quarter comeback.

Matthew Emmons/US Presswire

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Week 15: STREAK STOPPERS

DECEMBER 15
FALCONS 41....Jaguars 14
DECEMBER 17
Cowboys 31....BUCCANEERS 15

DECEMBER 18
Dolphins 30....BILLS 23
Seahawks 38....BEARS 14
Panthers 28....TEXANS 13
COLTS 27....Titans 13
CHIEFS 19....Packers 14
Saints 42....VIKINGS 20
Redskins 23....GIANTS 10
Bengals 20....RAMS 13
Lions 28....RAIDERS 27
CARDINALS 20....Browns 17 (OT)
Patriots 41....BRONCOS 23
EAGLES 45....Jets 19
CHARGERS 34....Ravens 14
DECEMBER 19
49ERS 20....Steelers 3

Little did it matter whether you hadn't won or lost in a while, for this was a week that served up results rattling the standings from top to bottom. The biggest surprise took place in Kansas City.

By defeating the Packers, the Chiefs made sure that the pursuit of the "next" perfect season would have to wait until 2012. They parlayed four Ryan Succop field goals and Jackie Battle's fourth-quarter touchdown run into a 19-14 victory.

Succop made kicks from 19 and 32 yards to give the hosts a 6-0 lead, and after Green Bay scored a third-quarter TD, he hit from 46 and 20 yards to put Kansas City back in front. Battle then padded the margin with his 1-yard run up the middle, which proved vital after the Packers managed a late score. Tamba Hali's three sacks paced a determined defense.

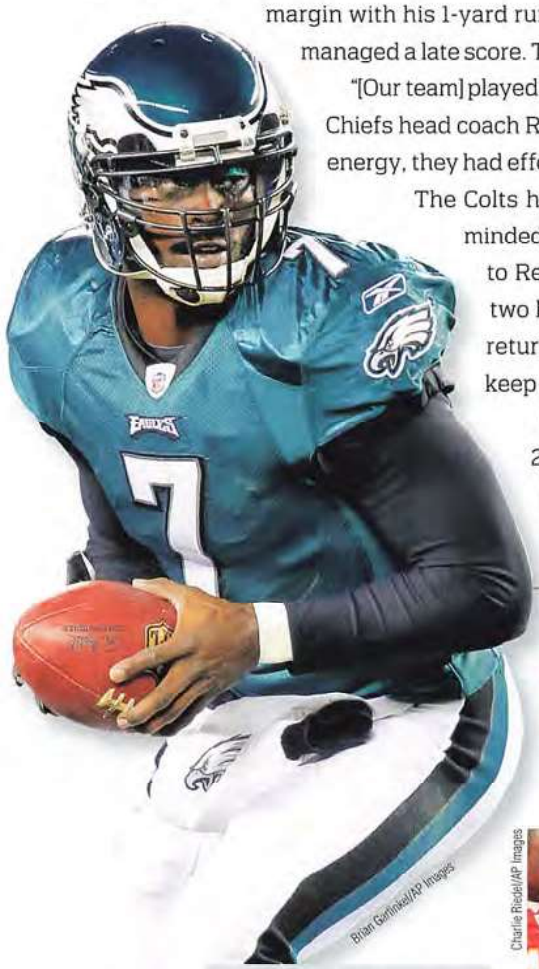
"[Our team] played the way that I would like to see us play all the time," said Chiefs head coach Romeo Crennel. "They followed the game plan, they had energy, they had effort, and they played their hearts out."

The Colts hit the win column for the first time, beating playoff-minded Tennessee, 27-13. Dan Orlovsky's third-quarter TD pass to Reggie Wayne gave Indianapolis the lead for good, and two big scoring plays—Jacob Lacey's 32-yard interception return and Donald Brown's 80-yard run—were enough to keep the Titans at bay.

Carolina snapped Houston's seven-game win streak, 28-13, as Cam Newton threw for a pair of touchdowns, while Tom Brady (320 passing yards, two TDs) and New England put an end to Denver's six-game run, 41-23.

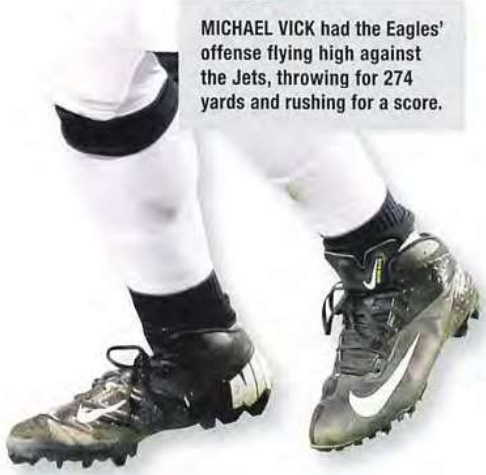
Darron Cummings/AP Images

▲ DONALD BROWN (161 rushing yards) and the Colts finally hit their stride.



Brian Garfinkel/AP Images

MICHAEL VICK had the Eagles' offense flying high against the Jets, throwing for 274 yards and rushing for a score.



DOWN THE STRETCH THEY COME

Matthew Stafford threw for 391 yards and four touchdowns as Detroit rallied from another double-digit deficit, scoring twice in the final five minutes to stun Oakland, 28-27. Stafford cut into the Raiders' lead with his 3-yard scoring toss to Titus Young and then hit Calvin Johnson in the back of the end zone from 6 yards out for the go-ahead points with 39 seconds to play.

Charlie Riedel/AP Images

▲ Chiefs players surround head coach ROMEO CRENNEL, whose first game at the helm was a win over the previously unbeaten Packers.

The Cardinals stopped the Browns, 20-17, in overtime, the sixth time this season they won a game after trailing in the fourth quarter. They were behind by 10 before Beanie Wells' 1-yard TD run and Jay Feely's 33-yard field goal tied things up. In the extra period, Patrick Peterson's 32-yard punt return and a 32-yard John Skelton-to-Larry Fitzgerald pass positioned Feely for his 22-yard game-winner. It was Arizona's sixth win in seven outings.

LeSean McCoy set a team record for TDs in a season (19),

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Evan Pinkus/AP Images

DeANGELO HALL makes a cut upfield after grabbing one of Washington's three interceptions in a win over the Giants.

Greg Trott/AP Images

Patriots tight end AARON HERNANDEZ was a big target against Denver, catching nine passes, including a second-quarter TD.

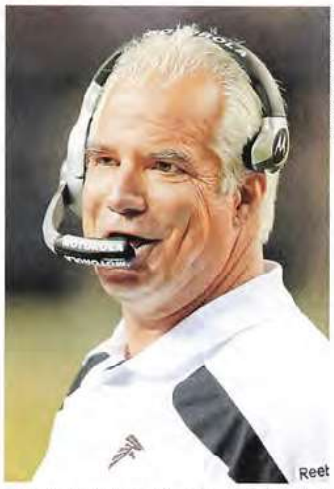
scoring three times in the Eagles' 45-19 victory over the Jets, snapping New York's three-game winning streak. Philadelphia defensive end Jason Babin posted his third straight game with at least three sacks, and the Eagles' defense forced four turnovers, one of those a fumble that Juqua Parker returned 47 yards for the game's first touchdown.

■ Atlanta moved a step closer to the playoffs by beating the Jaguars, 41-14. A dominant first half saw the Falcons take a 27-0 lead. QB Matt Ryan (19 of 26, 224 yards) threw two of his three touchdown passes to Roddy White.

■ Good things can happen even in defeat. Aaron Rodgers became the first Packer and just the fifth player in NFL history to pass for at least 40 TDs in a season, joining Tom Brady (50 in 2007), Peyton Manning (49 in 2004), Dan Marino (48 in 1984, 44 in 1986), and Kurt Warner (41 in 1999). Meanwhile, Baltimore and Pittsburgh clinched playoff berths despite setbacks. The Ravens were taken down, 34-14, by a San Diego squad that won for the third straight week; the Steelers lost to the 49ers, 20-3, keeping San Francisco in position for a first-round playoff bye.

■ Drew Brees' record-breaking season continued. In the Saints' 42-20 triumph against Minnesota, he became the first quarterback in NFL history to complete at least 80 percent of his passes, throw for at least 400 yards, and have five touchdowns and no interceptions in a game. It was the 11th time on the year that Brees threw for at least 300 yards, the league's single-season mark.

■ Seattle intercepted four passes, one of those Red Bryant's 20-yard interception return for the go-ahead score, as part of its 38-14 victory at Chicago.



Daniel Shirey/US Presswire

▲ MIKE SMITH and the Falcons clinched a fourth-straight winning season.

Week 15: PLAYER AWARDS

AFC

OFFENSE
Reggie Bush *RB, Dolphins*
Enjoyed third straight 100-plus yard rushing game, gaining career-high 203–76 of those coming on a fourth-quarter touchdown jaunt–as part of victory at Buffalo.

DEFENSE
Antwan Barnes *LB, Chargers*
As centerpiece of stubborn defensive effort that limited Ravens to 290 total yards, registered six tackles and career-best four sacks.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Ryan Succop *K, Chiefs*
Extended streak of consecutive field goals made to 21, hitting all four of his attempts–along with a PAT–in defeat of Green Bay.

NFC

OFFENSE
Calvin Johnson *WR, Lions*
Sensational effort (nine receptions, 214 yards) in comeback win over Raiders, highlighted by catches of 21 and 48 yards that preceded his game-winning 6-yard TD grab.

DEFENSE
John Abraham *DE, Falcons*
Totaled 3.5 sacks (accounting for 35.5 yards in losses), two forced fumbles (that led to 10 points), and five tackles in triumph vs. Jaguars.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Andy Lee *P, 49ers*
Placed four of his six punts inside the 15-yard line and posted a net average of 49.2 yards per punt in victory over Pittsburgh.

PEPSI NFL ROOKIE
Cam Newton *QB, Panthers*
Threw for 149 yards and two touchdowns, and added 55 rushing yards on seven carries, to direct win over Texans.

REGAL ROOKIE CLASS

Victories by Carolina's Cam Newton and Cincinnati's Andy Dalton gave NFL rookie quarterbacks 19 wins, the second-most in a season since 1970. With two weeks to go–and at least four rookie QBs starting–the mark of 22 wins (set in 2008) was in jeopardy. Yet that wasn't the only position where rookies were impacting the game. At the other end of many of Dalton's tosses was A.J. Green (right), whose six catches against the Rams gave him 61 on the season and pushed him over 1,000 receiving yards, the first rookie to accomplish that since Marques Colston in 2006. "He's the best first-round draft pick that I've ever been around," said Bengals coach Marvin Lewis. "He continues to amaze me every day." Rookie standouts on defense included 49ers linebacker Aldon Smith, who had 13 sacks, and Denver's Von Miller, with 11.5. Seattle's Richard Sherman was leading all rookies with three interceptions.

Scott Rovak/US Presswire

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Week 16: RACE TO THE TOP

DECEMBER 22
COLTS 19....Texans 16
DECEMBER 24
BILLS 40....Broncos 14

PATRIOTS 27....Dolphins 24
RAVENS 20....Browns 14
TITANS 23....Jaguars 17
Raiders 16....CHIEFS 13 (OT)

Giants 29....JETS 14
Vikings 33....REDSKINS 26
PANTHERS 48....Buccaneers 16
BENGALS 23....Cardinals 16

STEELERS 27....Rams 0
LIONS 38....Chargers 10
Eagles 20....COWBOYS 7
49ers 19....SEAHAWKS 17

DECEMBER 25
PACKERS 35....Bears 21
DECEMBER 26
SAINTS 45....Falcons 16

Mixed in with a number of playoff berths being clinched were those whose postseason fate remained unsettled heading into the final weekend. It was particularly wild in the AFC, where the North and West division champions had yet to be determined.

Although Pittsburgh and Baltimore each had secured postseason invitations, they were still vying for AFC North honors and an all-important first-round bye. In the AFC West, meanwhile, all four teams remained in contention for the division crown. Denver and Oakland also figured in the conference's Wild Card hunt, as did Cincinnati, Tennessee, and the N.Y. Jets.

The Ravens held off the Browns, 20-14, with Joe Flacco throwing a pair of scoring passes, while the Steelers blanked St. Louis, 27-0, behind a defense that allowed just 232 total yards. Both teams owned 11-4 marks, but Baltimore held the upper hand in the tiebreaker thanks to a sweep of the season series.

"It's about playing good ball at the right time," said Pittsburgh defensive end Brett Keisel. "We need to build off this win and hopefully get one next week and carry that into the dance."

In Cincinnati, Andy Dalton became just the fourth rookie quarterback to throw for 20 touchdowns in a season, hitting paydirt on passes to Jerome Simpson—who somersaulted into the end zone—and Jermaine Gresham in a 23-16 victory over Arizona that gave the Bengals the inside track for a playoff spot. Matt Hasselbeck's 350 passing yards carried the Titans past Jacksonville, 23-17, while the Jets stayed alive despite a loss to the Giants.

Evan Pinkus/AP Images

▲ Giants coach TOM COUGHLIN speaks with his team after they topped the Jets to stay in the NFC East title chase.

Kevin Hoffman/US Presswire

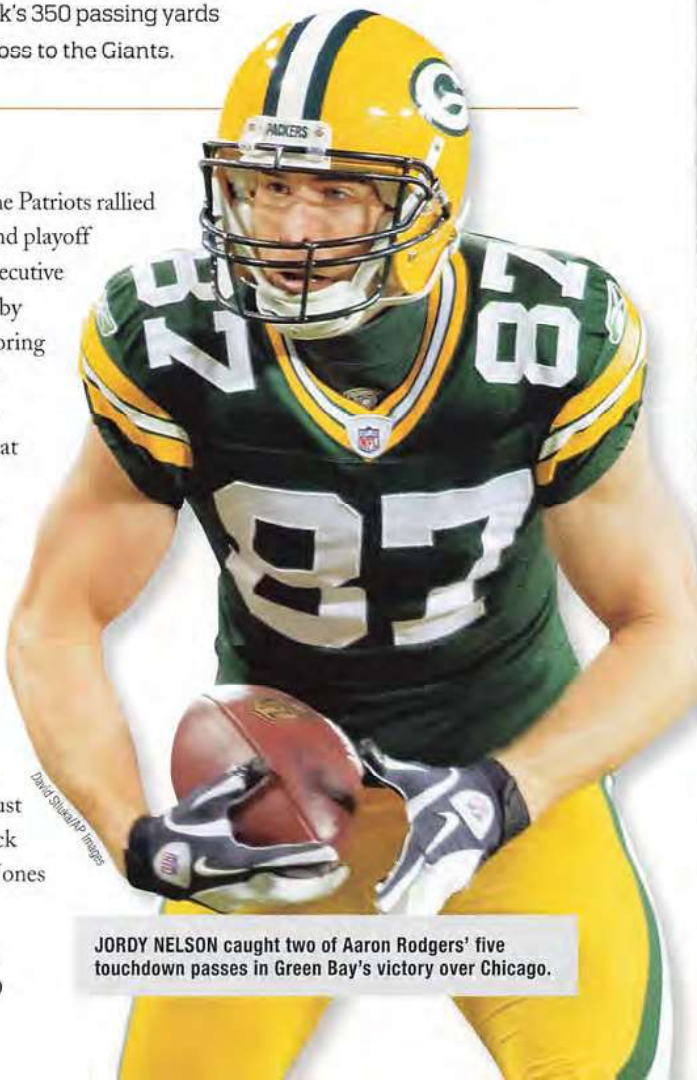
▲ The sharp running of C.J. SPILLER (111 yards, one TD) allowed the Bills to break free of Denver.

SWEET 16 FOR SOME

■ Trailing Miami, 17-0 at halftime, the Patriots rallied for a 27-24 win to lock up a first-round playoff bye. New England scored on five consecutive second-half possessions, highlighted by Tom Brady's two TD runs and his scoring pass to Deion Branch. Two turnovers aided the comeback, including Devin McCourty's red-zone interception that led to the go-ahead score, a 42-yard Stephen Gostkowski field goal. The Dolphins pulled within three late in the game, but never got the ball back as Wes Welker's 12th catch of the day earned the Patriots a game-clinching first down. It was the 10th time on the season that a team trailing by at least 17 points had come back to win.

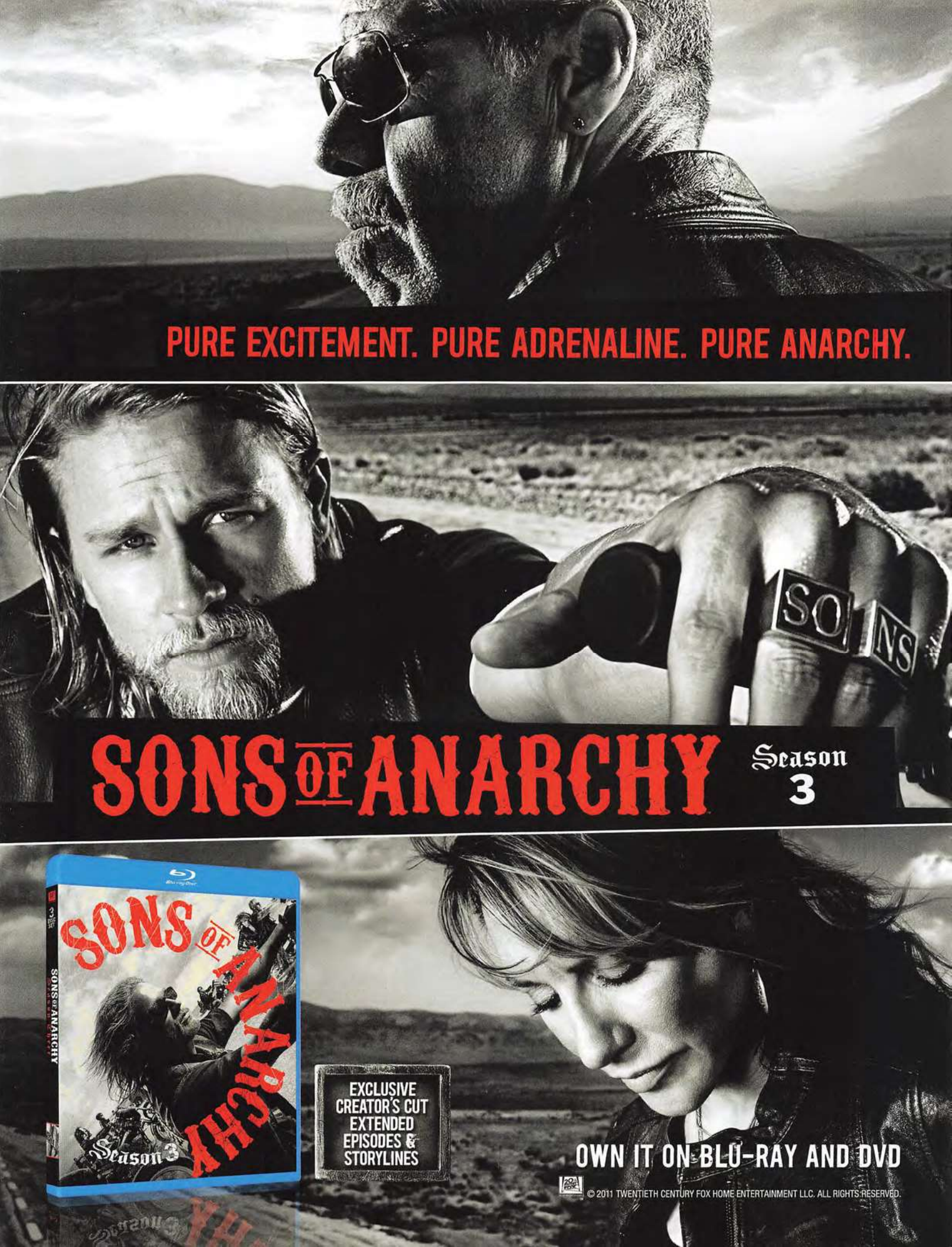
■ Green Bay rebounded from its first loss of the season to beat the Bears, 35-21, and secure the NFC's top seed. Aaron Rodgers threw for 283 yards and a career-high five touchdowns, including two each to Jordy Nelson and James Jones. The Packers held just a four-point lead midway through the third quarter until Rodgers struck for three quick scores. He hit Nelson for a 55-yard touchdown, then followed with a 7-yard strike to Jones and Nelson's second TD, the latter score set up by a Charlie Peprah interception.

■ Detroit clinched its first playoff berth since 1999 by defeating the Chargers, 38-10. Matthew Stafford helped the Lions jump out to a 24-0 lead, throwing first-half TD



David Stluka/AP Images

JORDY NELSON caught two of Aaron Rodgers' five touchdown passes in Green Bay's victory over Chicago.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passes to Brandon Pettigrew, Kevin Smith, and Calvin Johnson, and ended the day 29-of-36 for 373 yards. Detroit's final points came on Cliff Avril's 4-yard interception return for a score.

■ The NFC finished with a 33-31 record against the AFC in interconference games, marking the first time since 1995 that the NFC won the season series.

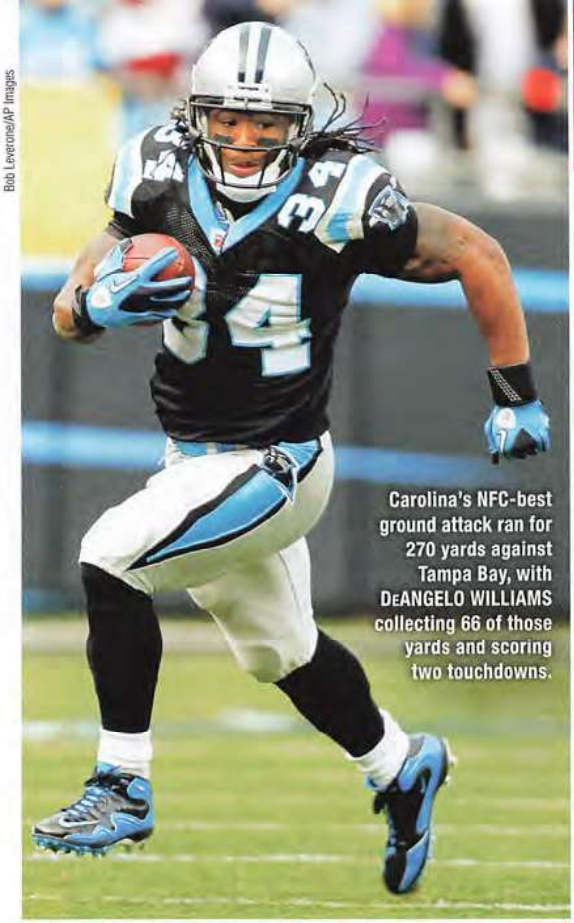
■ The Giants defeated the Jets, 29-14, ensuring that the NFC East championship would boil down to a winner-take-all contest against the Cowboys. The Giants gained control of the game late in the first half when, facing a third-and-10 from its own 1, Eli Manning hit a short pass to Victor Cruz, who avoided two tacklers and then darted up the right sideline for a 99-yard TD and a 10-7 lead.

■ The Raiders stayed alive in the AFC West by edging the Chiefs, 16-13, in overtime. Carson Palmer threw for 237 yards and a touchdown, and Sebastian Janikowski's 36-yard field goal won it.

■ Cam Newton and David Akers joined the ranks of NFL record-holders in their teams' wins. Newton broke the mark for single-season passing yards by a rookie, set by Peyton Manning (3,739) in 1998, in Carolina's 48-16 win over Tampa Bay. He threw for 171 yards and three TDs while adding another 65 yards on the ground. Akers set the record for field goals in a season while helping the 49ers to a 19-17 victory at Seattle. He kicked four on the day, the last of those a 39-yard game-winner. That gave him 42 on the year, two more than Neil Rackers had in 2005 with Arizona.

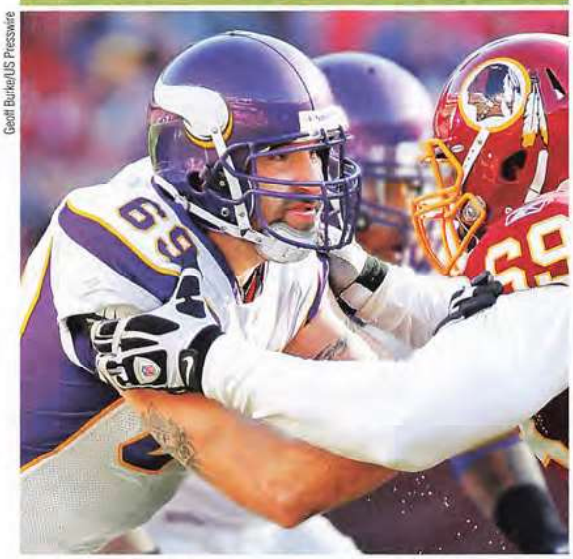
Paul Spinelli/AP Images

▲ RASHARD MENDENHALL (116 yards rushing, 1 TD) complemented the Steelers' stellar defensive effort.



Bob Leverone/AP Images

Carolina's NFC-best ground attack ran for 270 yards against Tampa Bay, with DEANGELO WILLIAMS collecting 66 of those yards and scoring two touchdowns.



Geoff Burke/US Presswire

▲ JARED ALLEN and the Vikings fought off the Redskins in a back-and-forth game that saw four second-half lead changes.

Week 16: PLAYER AWARDS

AFC

OFFENSE
Tom Brady *QB, Patriots*
Rallied team to win over Dolphins by completing 27 of 46 passes for 304 yards – his 10th 300-yard passing game of the season – and also rushing for a pair of scores.

DEFENSE
Robert Mathis *DE, Colts*
Enjoyed 17th multi-sack game of career, and added three tackles, one forced fumble, and a fumble recovery in victory at Houston.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Richard Seymour *DT, Raiders*
Blocked a pair of FG attempts, the second of those a 49-yarder at the end of regulation to send game into overtime, in win at Kansas City.

NFC

OFFENSE
Drew Brees *QB, Saints*
Shattered league single-season record for passing yards – held by Dan Marino for 27 years – when his 307-yard, four-TD effort against Atlanta gave him 5,087 on the year.

DEFENSE
Jason Pierre-Paul *DE, Giants*
Provided big plays in triumph over Jets with five tackles and two sacks, including one sack that forced a long FG attempt that was missed and another that preceded a game-sealing interception.

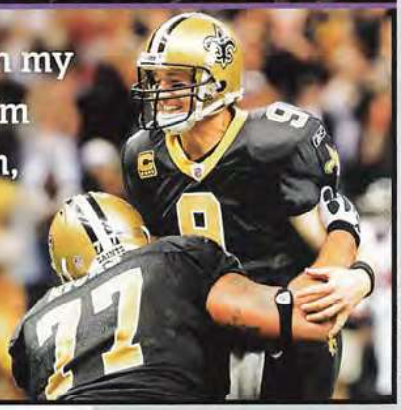
SPECIAL TEAMS
David Akers *K, 49ers*
Made all four of his FG attempts – from 53, 29, 44, and 39 yards – to reach a career-high 156 points and lift team to victory at Seattle.

PEPSI NFL ROOKIE
Cam Newton *QB, Panthers*
In win over Bucs, completed 70.6 percent of his passes for 171 yards and three TDs, and also rushed six times for 65 yards and a score.

GIVING THE SAINTS A LIFT

"If I could have put him on my shoulders and paraded him around the whole stadium, I would have done that. He deserves it."

~Saints offensive lineman Carl Nicks (77), after Drew Brees broke Dan Marino's NFL record for passing yards in a season.



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Week 17: ONE GIANT STEP

JANUARY 1
DOLPHINS 19....Jets 17
PATRIOTS 49....Bills 21
Titans 23....TEXANS 22

JAGUARS 19....Colts 13
EAGLES 34....Redskins 10
Bears 17....VIKINGS 13
SAINTS 45....Panthers 17

49ers 34....RAMS 27
PACKERS 45....Lions 41
Ravens 24....BENGALS 16
Steelers 13....BROWNS 9

Chiefs 7....BRONCOS 3
CARDINALS 23....Seahawks 20 (OT)
Chargers 38....RAIDERS 26

FALCONS 45....Buccaneers 24
GIANTS 31....Cowboys 14

Befitting such an exhilarating season, the final playoff opening wasn't determined until the final game ended. The Giants claimed it, becoming one of seven new division champs from a year ago.

Eli Manning threw for 346 yards and three touchdowns in a 31-14 victory over Dallas that secured the NFC East title and put New York in the postseason for the first time since 2008. And he wasted little time getting started, hitting Victor Cruz for a 74-yard TD on the team's second possession.

The lead swelled to 21-0 before halftime as Ahmad Bradshaw reached the end zone on a 5-yard run and a 10-yard catch. But refusing to go quietly, the Cowboys made a game of it with a pair of scoring passes from Tony Romo to Laurent Robinson that cut the margin to seven early in the fourth quarter.

Momentum was in the balance the next time the Giants had the ball. That's when Manning and Cruz connected on another big play, this one a 44-yard pass that set up a Lawrence Tynes field goal to make it a two-score game. Manning then added some insurance with a late TD throw to Hakeem Nicks.

"I knew we were going to fight and keep playing until the end," said Manning, who finished the year with a franchise-record 4,933 passing yards. "I feel good about the way we've handled the ups and downs [of the season]."

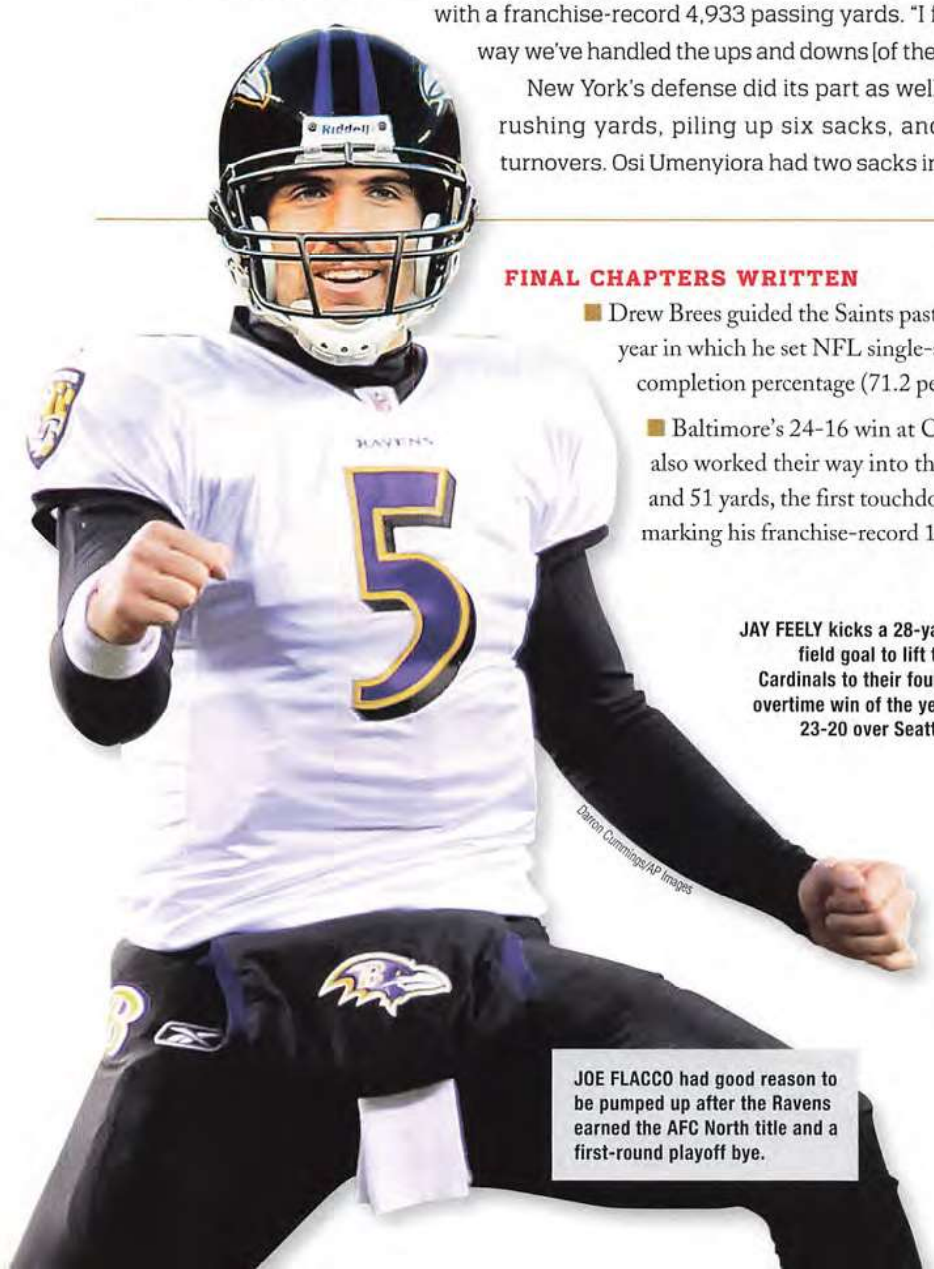
New York's defense did its part as well—allowing just 49 rushing yards, piling up six sacks, and forcing a pair of turnovers. Osi Umenyiora had two sacks in the win.

Jeff Curry/US Presswire

MICHAEL CRABTREE and the 49ers beat the Rams to wrap up the NFC's No. 2 seed.

FINAL CHAPTERS WRITTEN

- Drew Brees guided the Saints past Carolina, 45-17, and in the process capped a sensational year in which he set NFL single-season marks for passing yards (5,476), completions (468), completion percentage (71.2 percent), and 300-yard passing games (13).
- Baltimore's 24-16 win at Cincinnati clinched the AFC North title, but the Bengals also worked their way into the playoffs. The Ravens' Ray Rice scored on runs of 70 and 51 yards, the first touchdown coming on the game's fourth play and the latter one marking his franchise-record 15th of the season. Despite the setback, the Bengals took

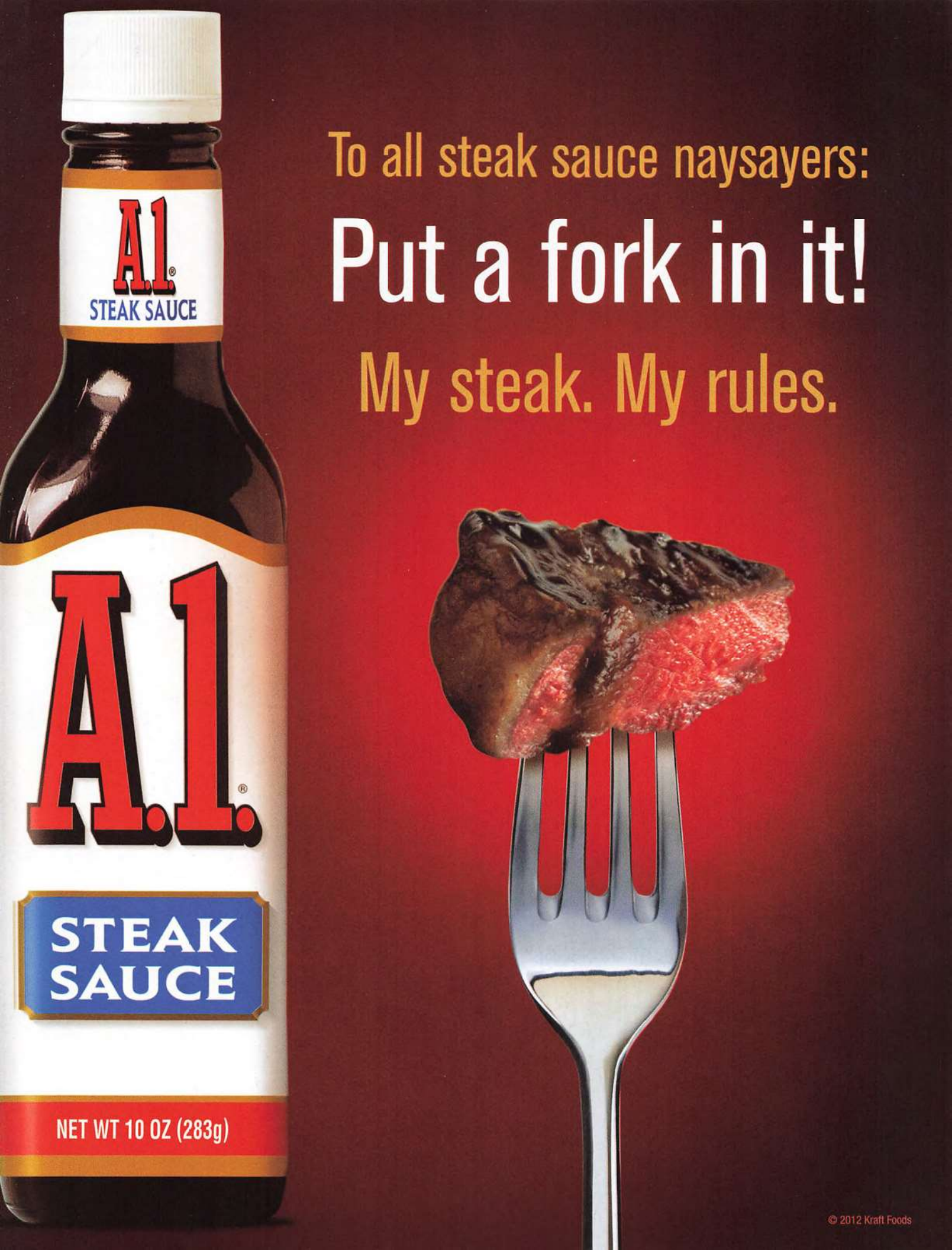


Darron Cummings/AP Images

JOE FLACCO had good reason to be pumped up after the Ravens earned the AFC North title and a first-round playoff bye.

JAY FEELY kicks a 28-yard field goal to lift the Cardinals to their fourth overtime win of the year, 23-20 over Seattle.

Ross D. Franklin/AP Images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Zantac
RANITIDINE TABLETS 150 mg / ACID REDUCER
150
STRONG FAST LASTING
PREVENTS & RELIEVES HEARTBURN associated with acid indigestion and sour stomach
Look! SUGAR-FREE HEARTBURN RELIEF
COOL MINT TABLETS
MAXIMUM STRENGTH
Zantac
RANITIDINE TABLETS 150 mg / ACID REDUCER
150
STRONG FAST LASTING
PREVENTS & RELIEVES HEARTBURN associated with acid indigestion and sour stomach

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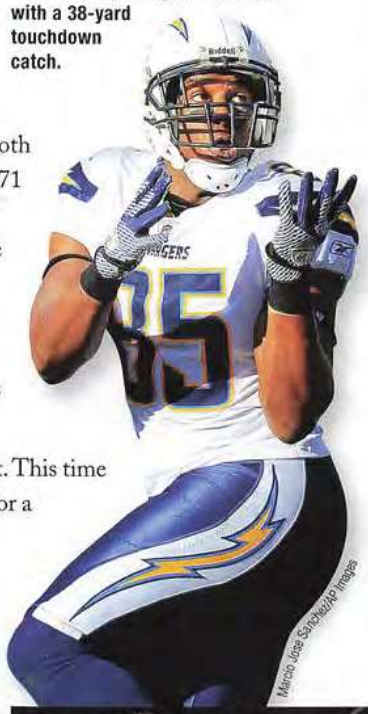
Greg M. Cooper/US Presswire

STERLING MOORE added to the Patriots' second-half comeback against Buffalo with a pair of interceptions.

David Kohl/US Presswire

▲ Bengals coach MARVIN LEWIS could be proud of his team's playoff berth.

▼ ANTONIO GATES opened the scoring for the Chargers against Oakland with a 38-yard touchdown catch.



Marcio Jose Sanchez/AP Images

advantage of losses by the Jets, Broncos, and Raiders, which cleared the path for the conference's final Wild Card spot.

■ Green Bay and Detroit treated fans to a record-breaking afternoon. The Packers' 45-41 win marked the first game in NFL history in which both starting quarterbacks passed for at least 400 yards and five TDs, and the 971 combined passing yards set a league single-game record. For the Lions, Matthew Stafford accounted for a franchise-record 520 yards through the air, pushing him past 5,000 yards for the season. Matt Flynn, the starter for Green Bay, piled up 480 yards, also setting a team mark, and his sixth TD of the day—a 4-yarder to Jermichael Finely with 1:10 remaining—put the Packers ahead to stay. And although Green Bay QB Aaron Rodgers didn't play, he finished the year with an NFL-record 122.5 passer rating.

■ For the second straight week, the Patriots roared back from a big deficit. This time they trailed Buffalo, 21-0, early in the second quarter before rebounding for a 49-21 triumph that clinched home-field advantage throughout the AFC playoffs. Rob Gronkowski's first TD catch of the game—a 17-yarder late in the third quarter—moved New England in front. Patriots QB Tom Brady ended the season with 5,235 passing yards.

■ Michael Vick joined Randall Cunningham as the only players in NFL history to have consecutive seasons with 3,000 yards passing and 500 yards rushing. Vick did most of the work with his left arm in the Eagles' 34-10 decision over Washington, throwing for 335 yards and three TDs as Philly closed out the year with four straight victories.

■ By rushing for 169 yards in the Jaguars' 19-13 win over Indianapolis, Maurice Jones-Drew both set a franchise single-season record and won the league rushing title. He finished with 1,606 yards on the ground, ahead of Rice's 1,364. Atlanta's Michael Turner won the NFC rushing crown with 1,340 yards.

■ The 49ers stopped St. Louis, 34-27, ensuring a first-round bye in the NFC playoffs. Alex Smith accounted for two touchdowns—on an 8-yard run and a 29-yard pass to Michael Crabtree—and kicker David Akers later threw a 14-yard TD to Crabtree off a fake field goal.

■ Linebacker Jason Taylor retired following the Dolphins' 19-17 win over the Jets. The 15-year veteran and six-time Pro Bowl selection ended his career with 139.5 sacks, sixth-most since the sack became an official statistic in 1982.

Week 17: PLAYER AWARDS

AFC

OFFENSE
Ray Rice *RB, Ravens*
Registered sixth 100-yard rushing game of season, gaining 191 yards and scoring twice—on runs of 70 and 51 yards—in win at Cincinnati.

DEFENSE
Troy Polamalu *S, Steelers*
Keyed a solid defensive effort in victory over Cleveland, with two tackles, three passes defensed, and his 29th career interception.

SPECIAL TEAMS
Richard Goodman *KR-WR, Chargers*
His 105-yard kickoff return for a TD, the longest in franchise history, came as part of win over Oakland.

NFC

OFFENSE
Matt Flynn *QB, Packers*
In shootout victory over Detroit, threw for 480 yards and became first QB in Super Bowl era with at least six touchdown passes in one of his first two NFL starts.

DEFENSE
Curtis Lofton *LB, Falcons*
Made 14 tackles and had a 26-yard interception return for a touchdown in win over Tampa Bay.

SPECIAL TEAMS
David Akers *K, 49ers*
Kicked two field goals, made four PATs, and threw a 14-yard TD pass to contribute to win at St. Louis.

PEPSI NFL ROOKIE
Sterling Moore *DB, Patriots*
Had two interceptions (one that he returned for a TD), a tackle, and two passes defensed to help beat Bills.

STANDINGS (01.01.12)

AFC EAST	W-L-T	PF	PA
Patriots*	13-3-0	513	342
Jets	8-8-0	377	363
Bills	6-10-0	372	434
Dolphins	6-10-0	329	313
AFC NORTH	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Ravens*	12-4-0	378	266
Steelers**	12-4-0	325	227
Bengals**	9-7-0	344	323
Browns	4-12-0	218	307
AFC SOUTH	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Texans*	10-6-0	381	278
Titans	9-7-0	325	317
Jaguars	5-11-0	243	329
Colts	2-14-0	243	430
AFC WEST	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Broncos*	8-8-0	309	390
Chargers	8-8-0	406	377
Raiders	8-8-0	359	433
Chiefs	7-9-0	212	338

NFC EAST	W-L-T	PF	PA
Giants*	9-7-0	394	400
Cowboys	8-8-0	369	347
Eagles	8-8-0	396	328
Redskins	5-11-0	288	367
NFC NORTH	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Packers*	15-1-0	560	359
Lions**	10-6-0	474	387
Bears	8-8-0	353	341
Vikings	3-13-0	340	449
NFC SOUTH	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Saints*	13-3-0	547	339
Falcons**	10-6-0	402	350
Panthers	6-10-0	406	429
Buccaneers	4-12-0	287	494
NFC WEST	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
49ers*	13-3-0	380	229
Cardinals	8-8-0	312	348
Seahawks	7-9-0	321	315
Rams	2-14-0	193	407

*Division Champion; **Wild Card

OFFENSE WINS ONE...

NFC WILD CARD

SAINTS 45, Lions 28

New Orleans' blistering offense continued to amaze as Drew Brees and company piled up the points at a dizzying rate to tame the Lions and get everyone in the Big Easy thinking about a return to the Big Game.

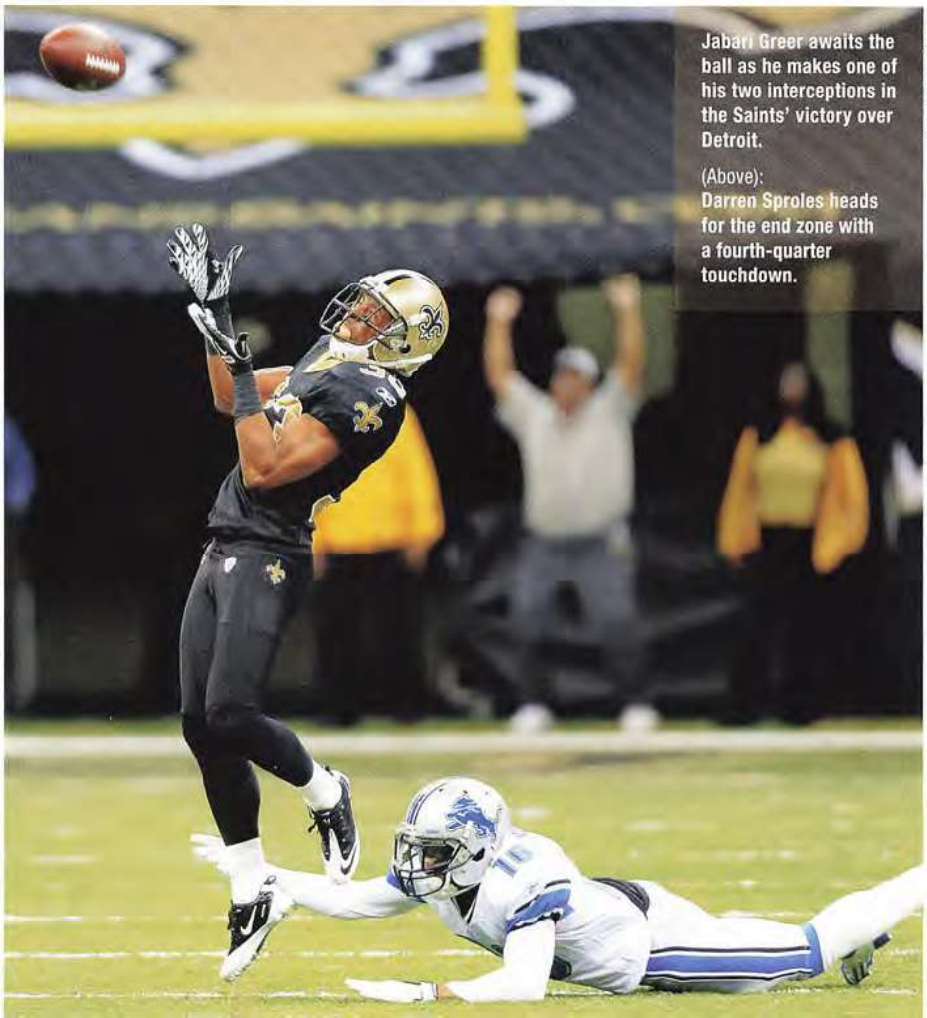
The Saints quarterback, who led the league in nearly every passing statistic during the 2011 regular season, threw for 466 yards and three touchdowns while leading the way to a particularly wild 45-28 Wild Card victory over Detroit inside a raucous Mercedes-Benz Superdome.

New Orleans broke the postseason mark for total yards with 626, smashing a record set 49 years ago, and didn't have to punt once all game.

Even with that, the Lions—in their first playoff appearance since 1999—didn't seem overwhelmed early on by either opponent or occasion. Led by rookie QB Matthew Stafford, Detroit took the opening kick and drove 80 yards, finishing with a 10-yard touchdown grab by tight end Will Heller for a 7-0 lead.

New Orleans pulled even on its second possession when an 11-play, 89-yard march was capped by Darren Sproles' 2-yard run.

The offenses were just getting started. Stafford led the Lions on another lengthy drive, culminating with a 13-yard TD pass to Calvin Johnson, while New Orleans countered with a 24-yard John Kasay field goal to pull within 14-10. Still, Detroit became just the second visiting team all season to hold a halftime lead over the Saints at the Superdome.



David J. Phillip/AP Images

Jabari Greer awaits the ball as he makes one of his two interceptions in the Saints' victory over Detroit.

(Above):
Darren Sproles heads for the end zone with a fourth-quarter touchdown.

David Mercer/US Presswire

It wouldn't last. New Orleans opened the third quarter with a 78-yard drive that ended with Brees' 31-yard touchdown pass to Devery Henderson, and then increased its margin to 24-14 when Brees found tight end Jimmy Graham open for a TD.

Detroit temporarily stemmed the momentum on Stafford's 1-yard scoring plunge, but the Saints pulled away with back-to-back touchdowns early in the fourth quarter. After Sproles reached paydirt for the second time, Jabari Greer grabbed an interception that set up Brees' 56-yard strike to Robert Meachem.

The teams would trade late touchdowns, with Detroit getting its points when Stafford (480 passing yards, 3 TDs) hit Johnson in the end zone, but New Orleans answered with Pierre Thomas' 1-yard run.

"We were pulling out all the stops," Brees said afterward. "We play aggressive. We're not going to apologize for that. We're not going to pull the reins back. It's pedal to the medal."

The win was the Saints' ninth in a row and earned them a trip to San Francisco to face the 49ers in the NFC divisional round.

"This will be a good challenge for us," said Saints head coach Sean Payton, whose team stood two wins away from reaching the Super Bowl for the second time in three years. "[San Francisco] has had an outstanding year, but we feel like we can compete with anybody."

Connecticut-based sportswriter Mark Preston wrote the Wild Card and Divisional Playoff recaps for the Super Bowl XLVI Official Game Program.

NFC WILD CARD

GIANTS 24, Falcons 2

New York employed an exceedingly stingy defense and a methodical ground assault to bring the high-flying Falcons down to earth and notch its first playoff win since capturing the Super Bowl crown four years ago.

William Perlman/USPresswire

NY Giants quarterback Eli Manning, continuing the finest season of his career, completed 23 of 32 passes and threw three TDs, while New York's defense smothered every Falcons attempt at takeoff to score a convincing 24-2 win in the first postseason game at MetLife Stadium.

Manning received critical help from his running game and the defense, and that combination had the Giants looking very much like a legitimate contender for a February date in Indianapolis.

Neither team scored in the first 15 minutes, but as the quarter ended, Atlanta was driving and faced a fourth-and-1 from the Giants' 24-yard line. Falcons head coach Mike Smith decided to go for the first down—instead of a field goal—but New York's defense rose up and stuffed QB Matt Ryan's sneak attempt.

Still, the sequence ended up producing points for the visitors, as their defense worked an intentional grounding call in the end zone to take a 2-0 lead. That safety would account for Atlanta's only points on the day.

The Giants found the scoreboard on their next possession: a 13-play, 85-yard drive that included a 34-yard Brandon Jacobs run and a fourth-and-1 conversion from the Falcons' 6-yard line. Moments later, Manning searched out Hakeem Nicks in the end zone for a 4-yard touchdown, sending New York into the half with a 7-2 lead.

Paul Jasienski/AP Images

Hakeem Nicks reaches up for a second-quarter touchdown catch that put the Giants on the board against Atlanta.

(Above): Osi Umenyiora enjoys the Giants' first playoff win since Super Bowl XLII.

The third quarter was all Giants. After Lawrence Tynes increased the advantage with his 22-yard field goal, the defense again stopped a Ryan sneak on fourth-and-1. With the ball back, Manning connected with Nicks on a short pass that the receiver turned into a 72-yard TD dash, making it a 17-2 game. New York capped the scoring when Manning fired a 27-yard TD to Mario Manningham early in the fourth quarter.

New York's tandem of Jacobs and Ahmad Bradshaw combined for 155 rushing yards, while Nicks caught six passes for 115 yards.

"It was a great mix of run and pass, and these guys have a great understanding of what our offense is," said Manning. "If we can get that run game going like we did in the second half, that opens up a lot of windows."

The win advanced the Giants to a divisional round matchup at Lambeau Field against the defending Super Bowl champion Packers. "If we can play defense like that," said head coach Tom Coughlin, "we will continue to make ourselves heard in this tournament."

AFC WILD CARD

TEXANS 31, Bengals 10

Houston made its first-ever franchise playoff appearance a memorable one, showcasing a dynamic defense and a roster of remarkable rookies while stifling Cincinnati in a win that was the definition of dominance.

In the first playoff showdown in the Super Bowl era to feature rookie starting quarterbacks, the Texans' T.J. Yates outdueled Andy Dalton to guide the AFC South champions past the Bengals, 31-10. The game was played in front of the largest crowd to attend any event at Reliant Stadium.

Fittingly for the 10-year-old franchise experiencing postseason play for the first time, a rookie also made the play that turned the game Houston's way. It came from defensive end J.J. Watt, who swallowed up a Dalton pass and returned it 29 yards for a score that gave the Texans the lead just before halftime.

The Bengals actually controlled play for a good chunk of the first half and struck first on a 1-yard Cedric Benson touchdown scamper. But Houston answered right back, capping a six-play drive with Arian Foster's first TD run of the day, an 8-yard dash off left end.

Mike Nugent's 37-yard field goal put Cincinnati back on top, but Houston again had an answer, as Neil Rackers booted a 39-yard field goal just after the two-minute warning to make it a 10-10 contest.

David Mercer/US Presswire

That figured to be the way the clubs would finish the half, but on the Bengals' next possession, Watt leaped to snare a Dalton pass that he then took to the house, sending the Texans into the break in front, 17-10. The interception—just the third pick-six by a defensive end in NFL playoff history—would prove more than a turnover. It was the turning point.

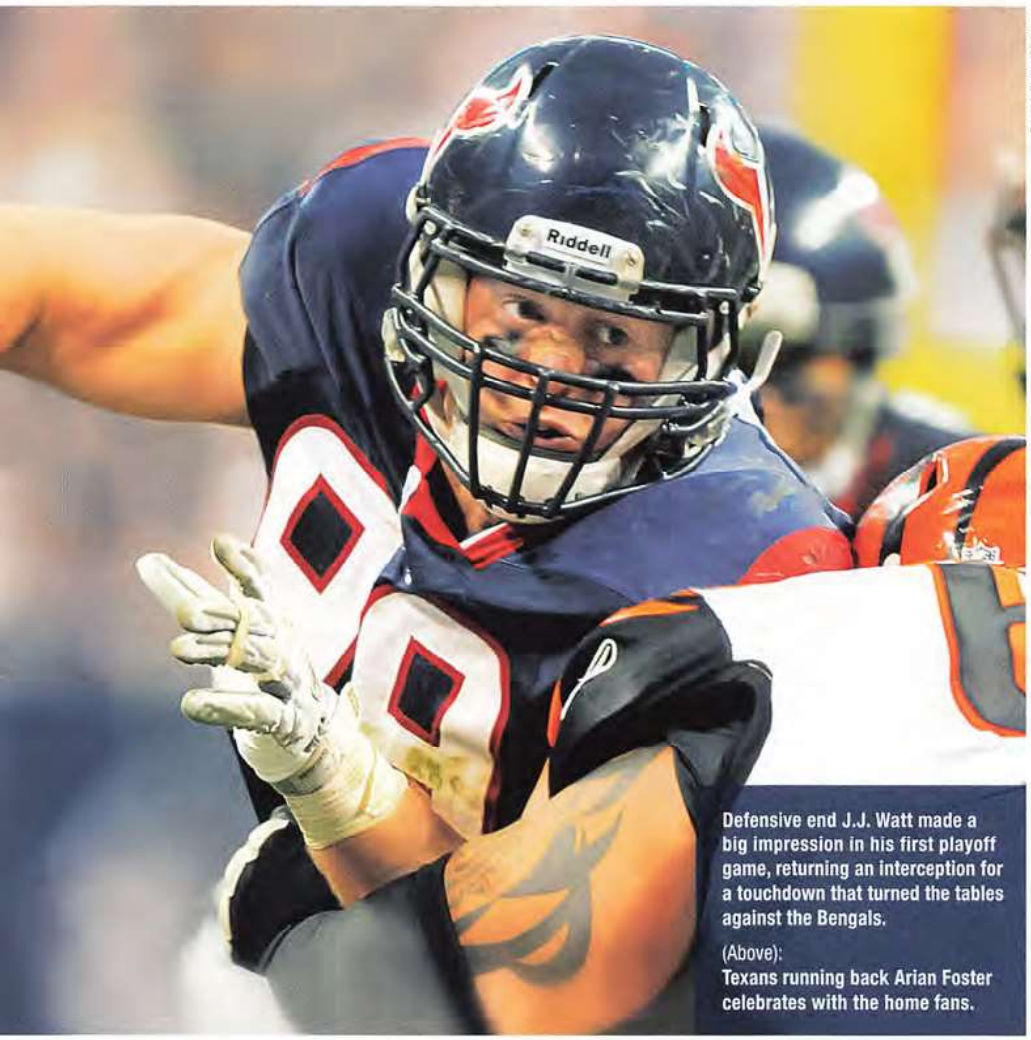
In the second half, Cincinnati was held scoreless while finding itself harassed by a swarming Texans defense. For the game, Houston allowed just 76 rushing yards, sacked Dalton four times, and forced four turnovers.

With 1:18 remaining in the third quarter, Texans wide receiver Andre Johnson (himself making his playoff debut in his ninth NFL season), caught a 40-yard TD pass from Yates, capping an 83-yard drive to put Houston up 24-10. In the fourth quarter, Foster—who ran the ball 24 times for 153 yards—completed the scoring with a 42-yard touchdown.

Dalton finished the game 24 of 42 for 257 yards, while Yates was 11 of 20 for 159 yards.

"We got back to our type of football, and that was the key," said Texans head coach Gary Kubiak, whose team advanced to face the Ravens in the divisional round.

"I'm just very proud of all the guys and the job they did in winning this game. Hopefully, there are some more to come."



David J. Phillip/AP Images

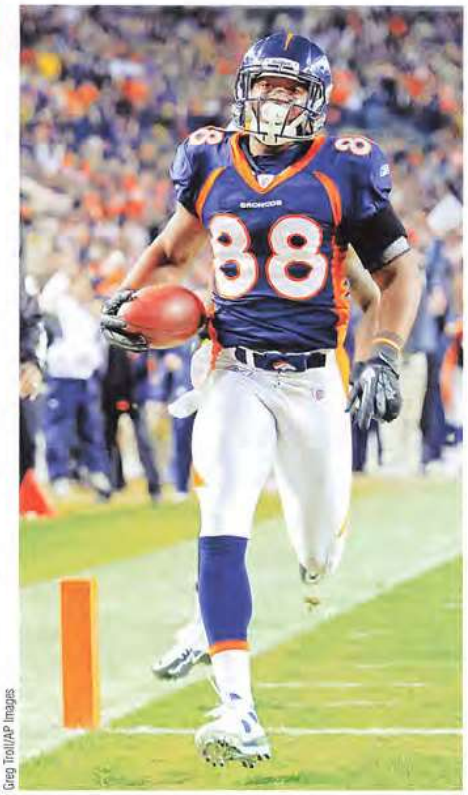
Defensive end J.J. Watt made a big impression in his first playoff game, returning an interception for a touchdown that turned the tables against the Bengals.

(Above):
Texans running back Arian Foster celebrates with the home fans.

AFC WILD CARD

BRONCOS 29, Steelers 23 (OT)

The mile-high magic continued for Tim Tebow and Denver, which countered a late Pittsburgh rally with an especially sudden death overtime upset that sent the defending AFC champs home a lot earlier than most had expected.



Greg Trott/AP Images

On the first play of OT, Tebow found Demaryius Thomas open across the middle for what the wide receiver turned into an 80-yard touchdown catch that gave the Broncos—who had entered the playoffs on a three-game skid—an electrifying 29-23 win.

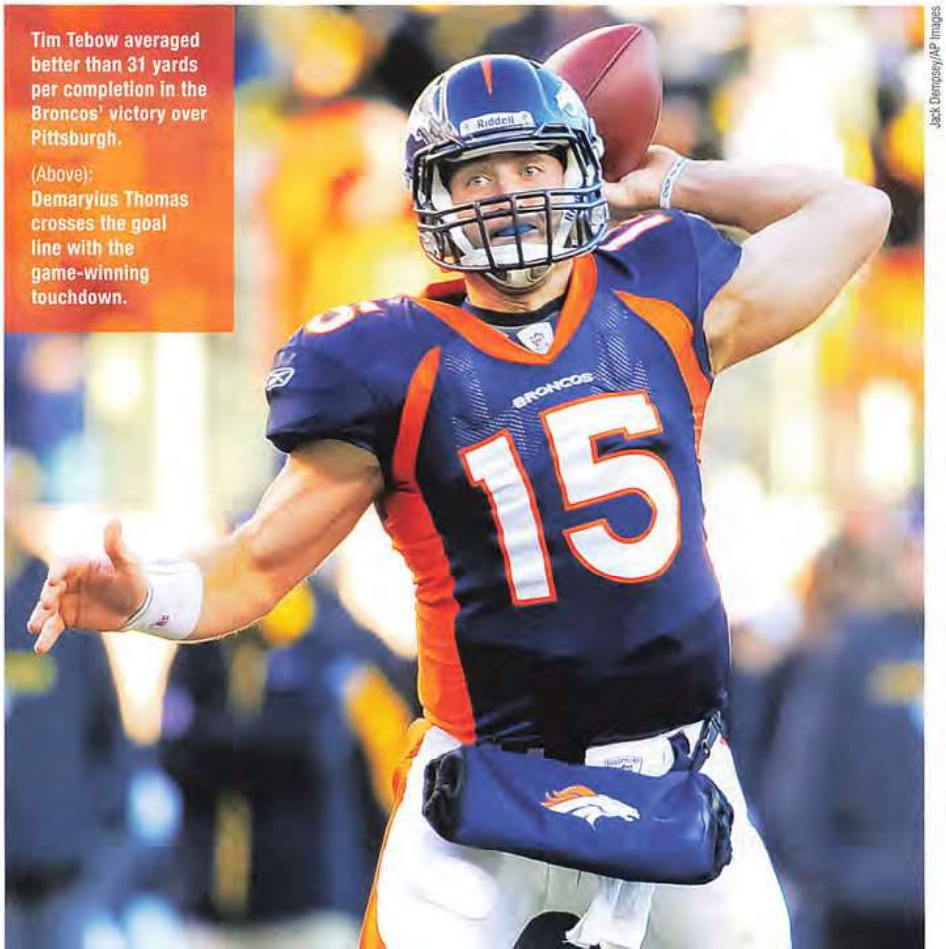
It capped a magical day for the second-year quarterback, who threw for a season-high 316 yards against the NFL's top-ranked defense.

Despite dominating time of possession in the game's first quarter, the Steelers could manage only a pair of Shaun Suisham field goals to hold a 6-0 lead.

In contrast, the second quarter was most decidedly Denver's, as the Broncos first struck with a Tebow-to-Eddie Royal 30-yard TD, then added another score on an 8-yard Tebow run, increasing their margin to 14-6. After Steelers QB Ben Roethlisberger was picked off by safety Quinton Carter, Matt Prater kicked a 20-yard field goal. Prater added another field goal with just over a minute to go in the half to make it 20-6.

Still, the defending AFC champions weren't about to go quietly. Roethlisberger engineered an 11-play, 87-yard scoring drive in the third quarter that ended with Mike Wallace's 1-yard TD run.

Denver pushed the lead out to 10 points on Prater's 35-yard field goal, but the Steelers came roaring back with a third Suisham field goal and a 31-yard pass from Roethlisberger to Jerricho Cotchery to tie the score, 23-23, with just under four minutes to play in regulation.



Jack Dempsey/AP Images

Tim Tebow averaged better than 31 yards per completion in the Broncos' victory over Pittsburgh.

(Above): **Demaryius Thomas crosses the goal line with the game-winning touchdown.**

When Pittsburgh lost the toss at the start of the extra session, they effectively lost the game as the Tebow-to-Thomas scoring strike took all of 11 seconds—the quickest ending to an overtime in NFL history.

An exuberant Tebow chased down his receiver in the end zone before taking a victory lap around the stadium.

"I jumped into the stands; first time I've done that," said Tebow. "That was fun."

Roethlisberger was 22 for 40 for 289 yards with one touchdown, an interception, and five sacks, while Tebow's passer rating of 125.6 was the highest in Broncos postseason history.

The Broncos' win earned them a rematch with the top-seeded New England Patriots, who rallied to defeat Denver, 41-23, at Sports Authority Field at Mile High in Week 15 of the regular season.

"We're just a fighting team," said cornerback Champ Bailey. "In any adverse situation, we'll find a way to get out of it.

"[People] say we backed into the playoffs, but we're in and we've won a game. Now, we've got to go try to win another one."

NFC DIVISIONAL

49ERS 36, Saints 32

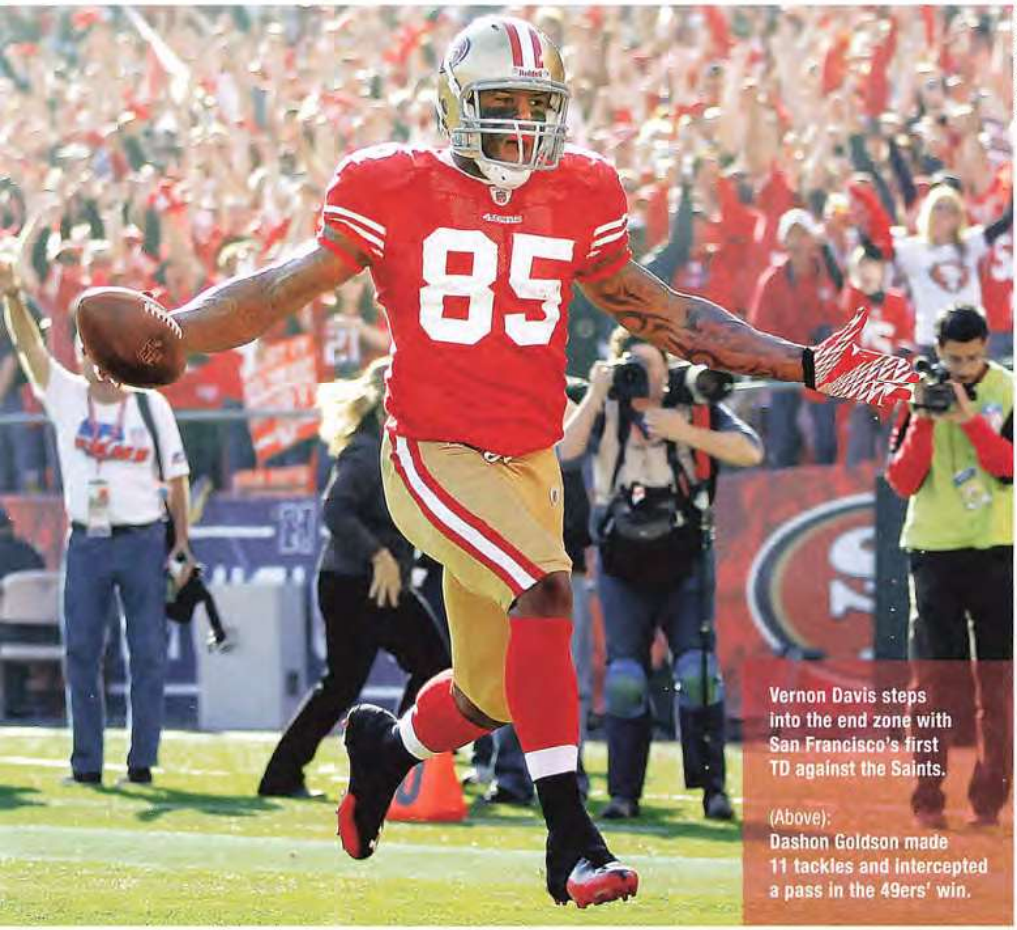
In an electrifying contest that went down to the wire, the 49ers' Alex Smith outdueled counterpart Drew Brees, leading San Francisco to an unforgettable win and earning himself a place in playoff lore.

Smith connected with tight end Vernon Davis with just nine seconds remaining to complete a stunning 36-32 win for the 49ers at Candlestick Park. With four lead changes in the final four minutes of play, the game became an instant classic and Smith, making his postseason debut, an immediate hometown hero for a team that's had its share of QB stars.

The Saints' high-flying offense appeared to pick up where it left off a week earlier, driving to the 49ers' 2-yard line on its first possession before a Pierre Thomas fumble turned the ball over. It was a precursor of things to come.

San Francisco found the scoreboard late in the first quarter when Smith connected with Davis in a seam along the left side for a 49-yard touchdown. Then Brees, who entered the game with an NFL record of 215 consecutive playoff passes without an interception, was picked off by Dashon Goldson, and the 49ers quickly upped their lead to 14-0 on a Smith-to-Michael Crabtree strike.

David Akers' 25-yard field goal made it 17-0 before the Saints began to march back. Jimmy Graham and Marques Colston caught TD passes that narrowed New Orleans' deficit to 17-14 at halftime.



Paul Sakuma/AP Images

Vernon Davis steps into the end zone with San Francisco's first TD against the Saints.

(Above): Dashon Goldson made 11 tackles and intercepted a pass in the 49ers' win.

Cary Edmondson/US Presswire

A fumbled punt by the Saints set up the lone points of the third quarter, a 41-yard Akers field goal that made it 20-14, but the final 15 minutes brought the sort of fireworks usually reserved for the 4th of July.

After New Orleans' John Kasay and Akers traded field goals, Brees found Sproles on a 44-yard strike that gave the Saints their first lead of the day, 24-23, with 4:02 to play.

Smith promptly answered, needing only six plays to move his team 80 yards and covering the final 28 himself with a run around left end on a third-and-8 play. Though the two-point conversion failed, the 49ers were now in front, 29-24, with 2:11 remaining.

Brees came right back, throwing a 66-yard touchdown to Graham, who caught the ball between two defenders just past midfield and hurried to the end zone. Sproles then hauled in a two-point conversion pass, putting the visitors ahead, 32-29, with 1:37 on the clock.

But it still wasn't over. Smith, playing with the sort of cool for which predecessors Joe Montana and Steve Young became famous, hit Davis for a 47-yard gain that brought the ball to the Saints' 20. Two plays later, he found him again—this time on a 14-yard bullet throw just beyond the goal line for the winning points. The victory put San Francisco in the NFC Championship Game for the first time since the 1997 season.

"Alex played really boldly," said 49ers head coach Jim Harbaugh. "It might be time to give him a little credit—that was a spectacular performance."

NFC DIVISIONAL

Giants 37, PACKERS 20

New York unleashed a potent offense and a relentless defense, proving itself better on both sides of the ball while planting the defending Super Bowl champions on their home turf.

Eli Manning was an impressive 21-of-33 for 330 yards and three TDs, and the Giants' defense consistently harassed the NFL's third-ranked offense as New York roared into Lambeau Field and scored a 37-20 win.

The Giants could do little wrong and the Packers little right on this day. Green Bay lost three fumbles and an interception, and QB Aaron Rodgers was sacked four times, leaving the team that only weeks ago was contemplating an undefeated season to instead ponder what might have been.

New York scored on its first possession with a 31-yard Lawrence Tynes field goal. The Packers' Mason Crosby evened things up with a 47-yard kick of his own, before Manning connected with wide receiver Hakeem Nicks on a 66-yard TD strike, putting the Giants in front, 10-3, after one quarter.

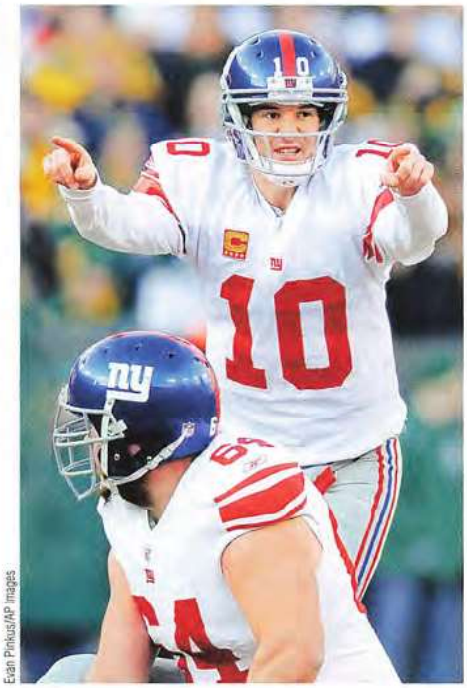
The Packers drew even again early in the second quater when Aaron Rodgers teamed with fullback John Kuhn on an 8-yard scoring pass, and when it looked as though New York would re-take the lead, Packers linebacker Brad Jones knocked down a 40-yard field goal attempt by Tynes.

Missed opportunities would normally haunt a team playing Green Bay, but not this time. Kuhn fumbled on the ensuing possession and Tynes made good on a 23-yard field goal that put New York up, 13-10. New York added to that lead in stunning fashion after getting the ball with just 41 seconds remaining in the half. Ahmad Bradshaw ripped off a 23-yard run that brought the ball to the Packers' 37 and allowed for one more play before the break. Instead of trying a long field goal, the Giants went for the end zone and were rewarded when Hakeem Nicks positioned himself perfectly for a leaping grab that silenced the crowd and gave New York a 20-10 advantage.

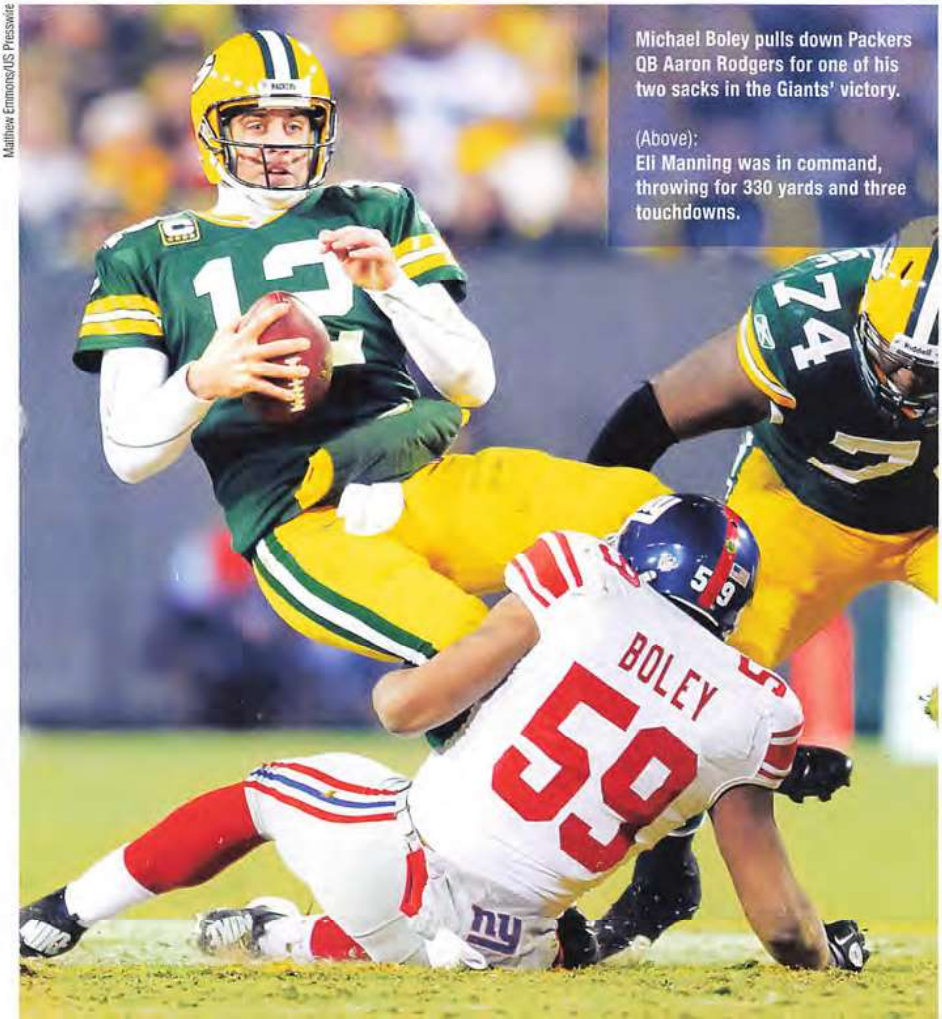
Green Bay crept closer on Crosby's 35-yard field goal, but the outcome was never in doubt in the fourth quarter. Tynes kicked his third field goal, and following a Chase Blackburn fumble recovery, Mario Manningham caught a 4-yard TD extending the Giants' lead to 30-13.

The Packers gave their fans hope when Rodgers hit Donald Driver for a score, but the Giants came right back, converting a key third-and-11 with a Victor Cruz catch and clinching their spot in the NFC Championship Game when Brandon Jacobs rumbled 14 yards for the game's final touchdown.

"Our team is playing well right now," said Manning. "I think our guys understand what's important in winning games against the best teams in the playoffs."



Evan Pinkus/AP Images



Matthew Emmons/US Presswire

Michael Boley pulls down Packers QB Aaron Rodgers for one of his two sacks in the Giants' victory.

(Above): Eli Manning was in command, throwing for 330 yards and three touchdowns.

AFC DIVISIONAL

PATRIOTS 45, Broncos 10

Tom Brady's relentless aerial assault and the Patriots' resurgent defense kept the upstart Broncos from ever getting out of the gate, bringing Denver's season of miracles to an abrupt ending on a frigid night in New England.

In a sizzling showcase of focus and talent, Brady fired a playoff record-tying six TD passes as the AFC East champions rolled to a 45-10 victory at Gillette Stadium for their first playoff win in four years.

The Patriots controlled the game from the start. After the Broncos won the toss and elected to defer, Brady marched his team to the end zone in just five plays, a 7-yard throw to Wes Welker producing the night's first touchdown. The drive was highlighted by Aaron Hernandez's 43-yard run, a play that saw the tight end line up as a running back.

Linebacker Rob Ninkovich created a turnover that led to the Patriots' next score. He strip-sacked Denver QB Tim Tebow, setting up Brady for another quick drive that ended with a brilliant diving catch by tight end Rob Gronkowski, making it 14-0 before the game was eight minutes old.

The Broncos' fortunes briefly improved when Quinton Carter stepped in front of a Brady pass near midfield. That set up the visitors' only trip to the end zone, a 5-yard Willis McGahee TD run to open the second quarter.

Mark L. Baer/US Presswire

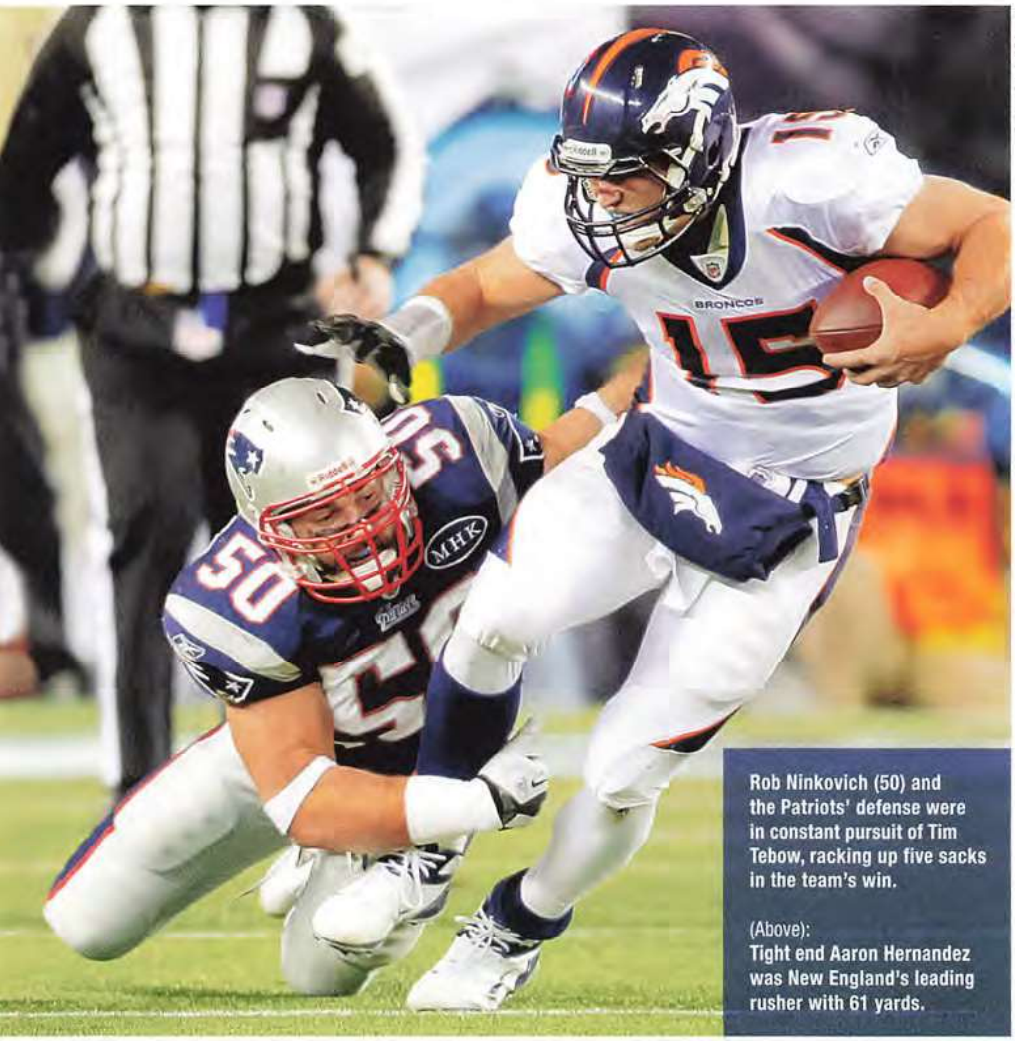
From there, the Brady juggernaut sailed full steam. A perfectly-placed 61-yard TD strike to veteran wide receiver Deion Branch was sandwiched between two more scoring tosses to Gronkowski, and the Patriots took a 35-7 lead into the locker room. Brady's five first-half TD passes set an NFL playoff record.

In the third, the Patriots added to the margin when Brady threw his sixth touchdown of the contest, this one a 17-yard strike to Hernandez. A pair of field goals rounded out the scoring—Denver snapped the Patriots' run with Matt Prater's 41-yarder, but Stephen Gostkowski countered from 20 yards out to complete the scoring.

Just as impressive as the points generated by New England's offense was the pressure generated by its defense. Patriots defenders pinned Denver back on its heels, allowing just 252 total yards and holding Broncos leading rusher McGahee to just 76 yards on 17 carries.

Still, it was hard to overlook the offense. The 45 points and 509 total yards were franchise playoff records, and the win moved New England on to the AFC Championship Game for the eighth time in history.

"We started fast, and it was a big win for us," said Brady, who moved within one win of his fifth Super Bowl appearance. "Hopefully, we can go out next week and play even better."



Stephan Savoia/AP Images

Rob Ninkovich (50) and the Patriots' defense were in constant pursuit of Tim Tebow, racking up five sacks in the team's win.

(Above): Tight end Aaron Hernandez was New England's leading rusher with 61 yards.

AFC DIVISIONAL

RAVENS 20, Texans 13

Despite seeing its offense held in check, Baltimore's dominant defense dug deep in the second half to allow the Ravens to protect their home turf from the tenacious and talented Texans.

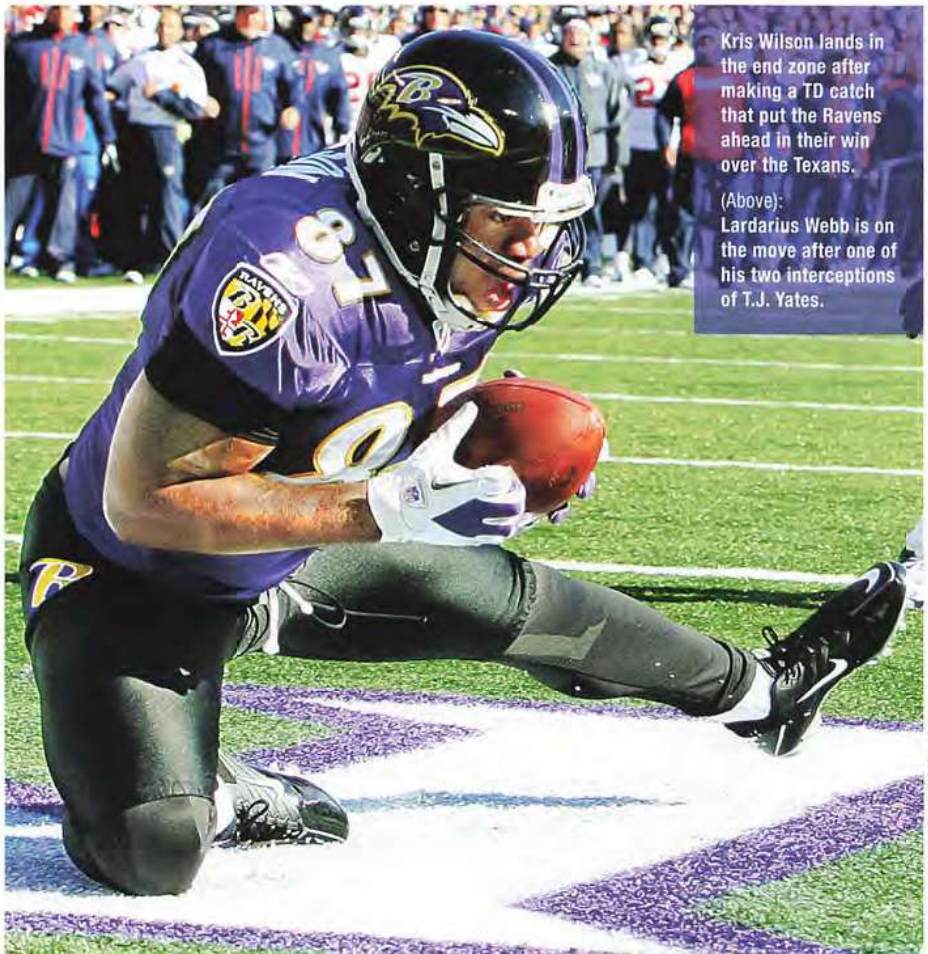
And while neither offense provided much in the way of highlight material, both defenses sure did as the league's second- and third-ranked units collided. Baltimore won that battle and received just enough on the offensive side to pull out a 20-13 victory at M&T Bank Stadium.

Both signal callers, Baltimore's Joe Flacco and Houston's T.J. Yates, were tested mightily, with the veteran Flacco faring a bit better, completing 14-of-27 throws for 176 yards and two clutch TDs. Yates had more yards (184), but was picked off three times.

The Texans found themselves on the board quickly, though the fact they were limited to three points was an indication of things to come. Danieal Manning returned the opening kick 60 yards, but Houston was able to convert only one first down and had to turn to Neil Rackers for a 40-yard field goal.

Baltimore went three-and-out on its first possession, but punt returner Jacoby Jones muffed the ensuing kick and the ball was swallowed up by the Ravens' Jimmy Smith at the 2-yard line. Flacco then connected on a short pass to Kris Wilson to put Baltimore up, 7-3.

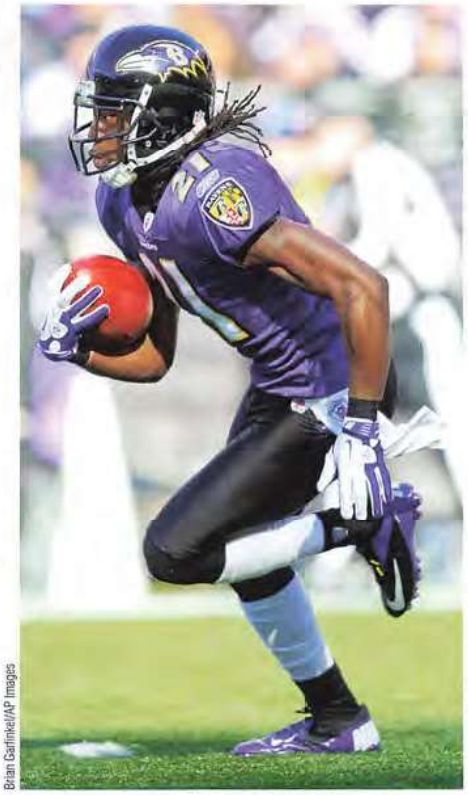
Billy Cundiff added to the lead with his 48-yard field goal, and after a Lardarius Webb interception, Flacco led a five-play drive that ended with his 10-yard pass to Anquan Boldin that made it 17-3.



Kris Wilson lands in the end zone after making a TD catch that put the Ravens ahead in their win over the Texans.

(Above): Lardarius Webb is on the move after one of his two interceptions of T.J. Yates.

Mitch Stringer/US Presswire



Brian Garfinkel/AP Images

Undaunted, Houston got on track in the second quarter, netting Rackers' 33-yard field goal and Arian Foster's 1-yard touchdown run to pull within 17-13 at halftime. Foster was one of the bright spots for the Houston offense, rushing for 132 yards on 27 carries.

Both teams turned up the defense in the second half. After Rackers' bid to get his team within a point came up just shy—his 50-yard field goal attempt clipped the bottom of the crossbar—the Ravens used the ensuing short field to drive all the way to the Houston 1. But on fourth-and-goal, Ray Rice was stopped shy of the end zone.

The only points after intermission came when Webb's second interception of Yates led to a 44-yard Cundiff field goal. Houston had two late opportunities to tie things up, but Ravens safety Ed Reed ended one threat with an interception and he knocked down a fourth-down Hail Mary pass on the next.

Baltimore, which finished the season 9-0 at home, won the right to play the Patriots for the AFC crown.

"It wasn't pretty, but we're not a pretty team," said Ravens linebacker Terrell Suggs, who made six tackles. "We got the 'W' and now it's on to the AFC championship."

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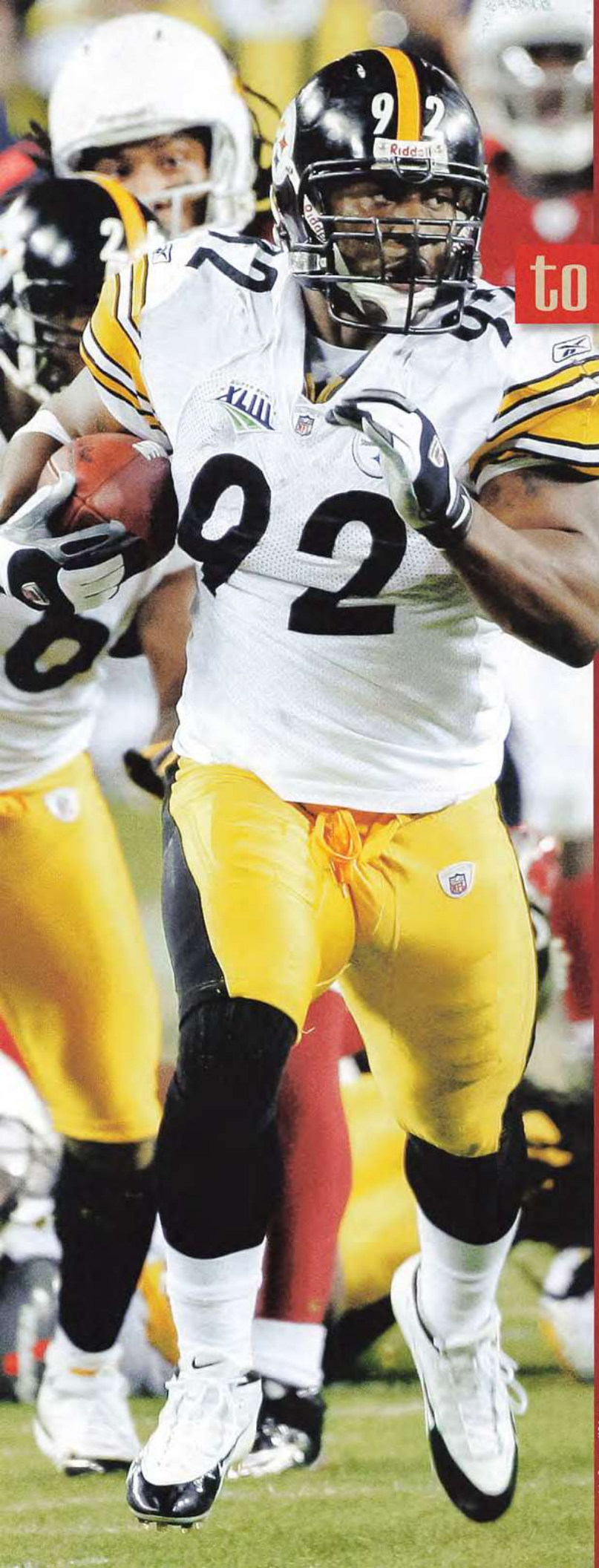

John Bazemore/AP Images

TAKING IT to the HOUSE

Trying to figure out who's going to win this year's Super Bowl? Here's the one stat that could give you the answer.

by Clifton Brown

When an interception is returned for a touchdown in the Super Bowl, think of two words: Game over.

All 11 teams that have had a pick-six in the Super Bowl have won the game. That includes the last three Super Bowl champions. In Super Bowl XLV last year, Nick Collins of the Packers had one in the first quarter against the Steelers' Ben Roethlisberger that gave his team a 14-0 lead. In Super Bowl XLIV, Tracy Porter sealed the Saints' victory over the Colts with his fourth-quarter interception-return touchdown against Peyton Manning. And in Super Bowl XLIII, James Harrison's 100-yard interception return for a touchdown just before halftime instantly became one of the great plays in Super Bowl history, and ended up being a key moment in Pittsburgh's win over the Cardinals.

(Left) **James Harrison rumbles the length of the field with his 100-yard interception return for a touchdown during the Steelers' Super Bowl XLIII victory over Arizona.**

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Mark Humphrey/AP Images

Why is the pick-six such a game-defining play, not only in the Super Bowl, but in any football game? There are many reasons. Start with how much it changes momentum. The team that scores is energized; the team that's scored upon is deflated.

"Anytime that play happens, it's really more than a seven-point swing," says Hall of Fame quarterback Dan Marino. "It's not as easy to score in the NFL as it looks. A pick-six is a touchdown that the offense didn't have to work for. It's like a gift. You're standing on the sidelines and your defense just scored? You feel great. But if you're the other quarterback, you feel lousy. Sometimes, teams have a hard time shaking that off."

Rod Woodson is the NFL's all-time leader in interceptions brought back for TDs (12). Obviously, he had great ability—he was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 2009—but he also was unafraid to take chances at the right time. The masters of the art all share that in common.

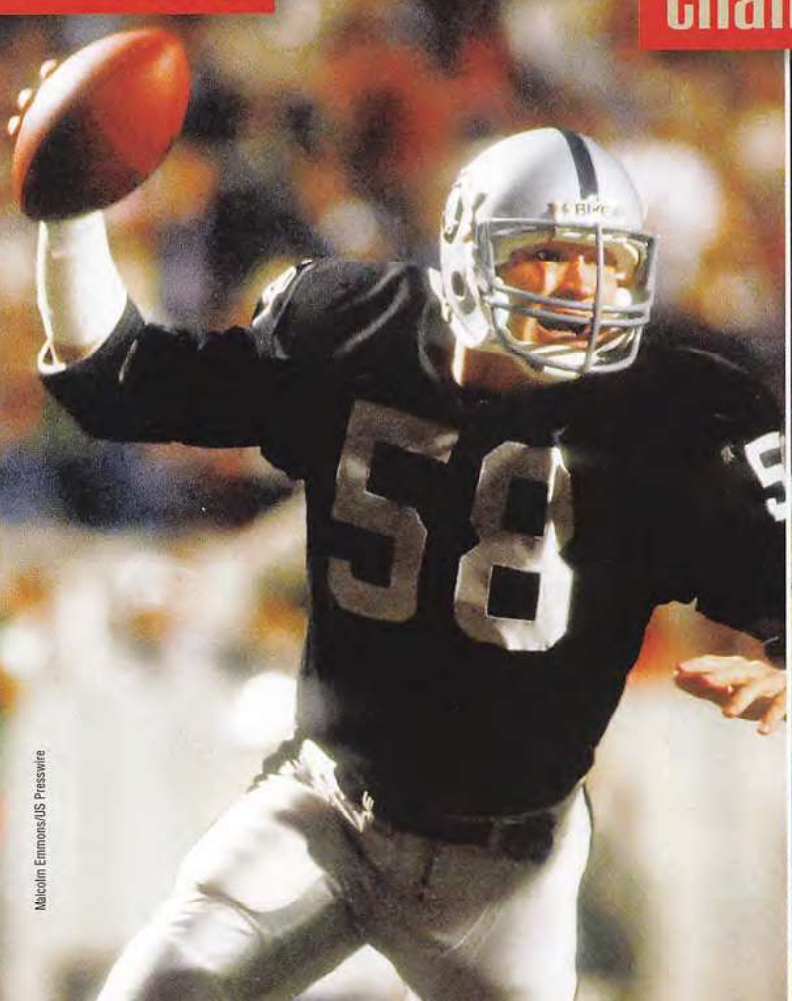
"Pulling the trigger gives you the opportunity to make plays," says Woodson. "You only get two or three [opportunities a game] as a defensive back to make plays."

The Packers were the only team that had an interception-return touchdown in last year's playoffs. In fact, they had three of them. No wonder they won a championship. Dom Capers, the team's defensive coordinator, looks for playmakers when he's putting together a unit.

"I think they're extremely important," he says. "You look at any really

(Left) **Kelvin Hayden outduels Muhsin Muhammad for an interception that he brought back for a touchdown in the Colts' Super Bowl XLI victory over Chicago.** (Below) **Two of the Raiders' Super Bowl wins have featured interception-return TDs: Jack Squirek (left) in Super Bowl XVIII and Willie Brown in Super Bowl XI.**

"It's really more than a seven-point swing."



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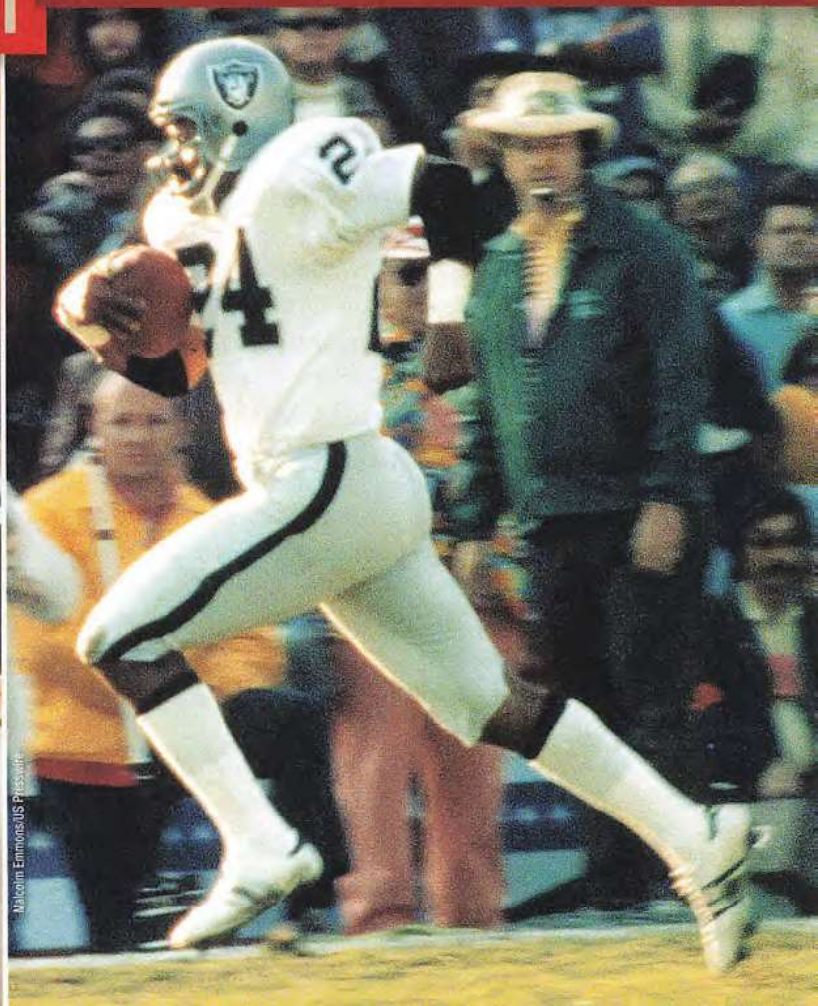

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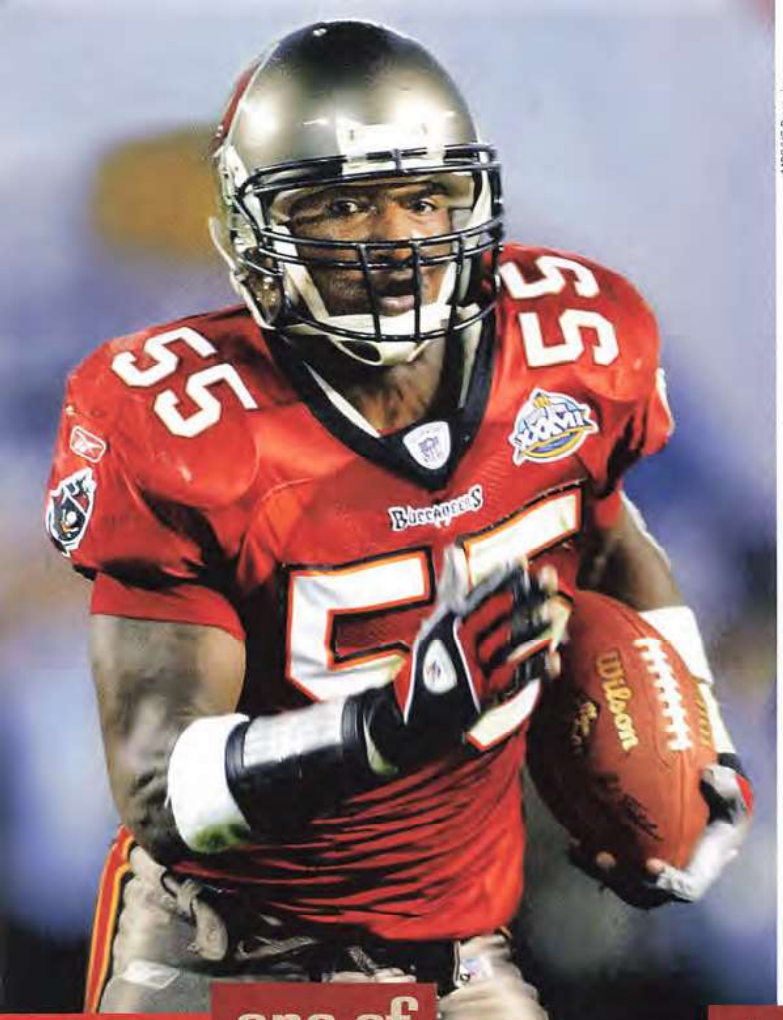

MPS/US Presswire

Cardinals almost stopped the touchdown, showing tremendous hustle by pursuing Harrison the whole way. At one point, Fitzgerald ran nearly five yards out of bounds in front of the Cardinals bench to avoid slower players who were blocking his path.

Fitzgerald finally collared Harrison near the goal line, but his momentum carried the two of them into the end zone. Great play. Instant classic. And without Harrison's touchdown, who knows if the Steelers would have prevailed.

"Harrison's interception return was one of the most incredible plays I've ever seen," says Boomer Esiason, who quarterbacked the Bengals in Super Bowl XXIII. "Even then, the Steelers still needed a last-minute drive to win it. If Harrison doesn't come up big, maybe the Cardinals are the champs instead."

In a Super Bowl, a momentum-changing play like a pick-six seems to carry even more weight than it does during the regular season. Why?

"The bigger the game, the bigger the mistake," Marino says.

"Mistakes and turnovers are magnified in playoff games," agrees Rich Gannon, another former NFL signal-caller. "It's a nightmare for a quarterback. Sometimes it throws you out of rhythm for awhile."

The first two players with interception returns for touchdowns in the Super Bowl became Hall of Famers—the Packers' Herb Adderley (Super Bowl II) and the Raiders' Willie Brown (Super Bowl XI).

(Left) Derrick Brooks completed Tampa Bay's rout of the Raiders in Super Bowl XXXVII with his 50-yard interception return for a touchdown, one of three the Bucs brought back on the day. (Below) The Packers' Nick Collins (36) celebrates his first-quarter pick-six in last year's Super Bowl with teammate Clay Matthews.

"It's one of the most important plays in football."

good defense and you've got two, three, four guys who are going to make plays that might change that game around. That's what these games come down to. During the course of a game, if it's a 60-play game, there are probably three or four plays that have a big influence on determining the outcome.

"Charles Woodson has always been a big playmaker for us. You put him around the ball, and he's one of the very best at it."

He also creates opportunities for others to do the same. Before Collins' pickoff in the Super Bowl, Tramon Williams brought back one 70 yards for a score that capped a second-quarter assault in the Packers' divisional round win over the Falcons, and B.J. Raji had an 18-yarder that helped stem a Bears rally in the conference championship game.

Harrison's electrifying return after his interception of Kurt Warner is one of those Super Bowl plays that remains etched in fans' memories for life. Watch a replay and you'll see its many elements. The Steelers disguised their defense beautifully, showing blitz before the ball was snapped, then dropping into a zone. The throw by Warner was actually accurate, on target to hit Anquan Boldin in stride for a touchdown as he cut across the middle.

But Warner never saw Harrison. The outside linebacker stepped in front of Boldin and caught the football, then morphed into a running back as he went the length of the field. It was a beautiful run, and Harrison had plenty of help. He picked up a great block from LaMarr Woodley, who wiped out Tim Hightower. Larry Fitzgerald of the

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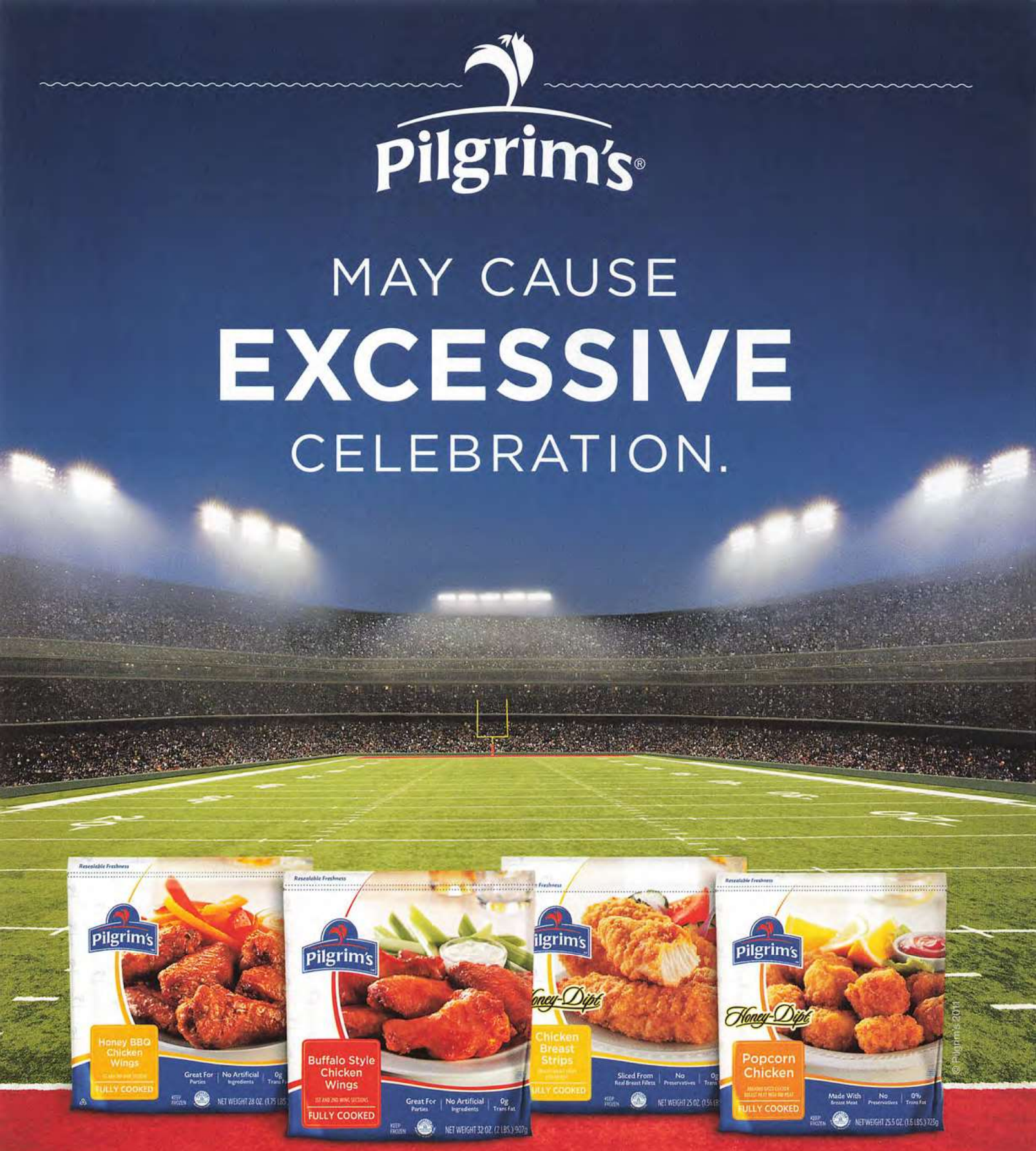

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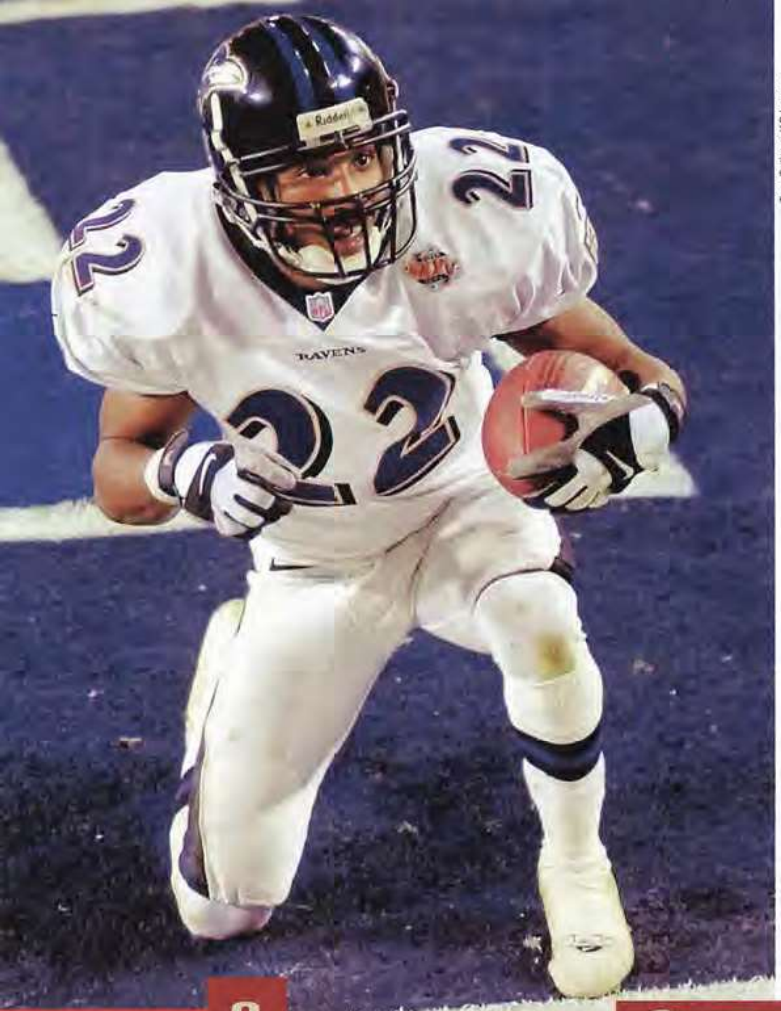

Tony Gutierrez/AP Images

Baltimore's Super Bowl XXXV victory included an interception-return touchdown by Duane Starks.

"It's a nightmare for a quarterback."

"I learned early in my career to not throw in Willie Brown's direction very often," says Chargers Hall of Fame quarterback Dan Fouts. "We played them twice a year. There are times when great corners will actually bait you into throwing at them, especially in key situations."

There was a nine-year gap between Adderley and Brown bringing back their interceptions for scores, while seven Super Bowl pick-six plays have occurred during the past 10 years. That increased frequency is not a coincidence. The NFL has become a pass-first league, and if you put the ball in the air, you risk having it picked off.

"It's a throwing league now," says Esiason. "Teams don't hold back. Even teams that like to run know the quickest way to score is to get the ball to your wide receivers."

The trend also reflects how much defenses now focus on takeaways. During the Saints' Super Bowl season, their ability to capitalize on turnovers was a huge part of their success. It was fitting that Porter's interception of Manning sealed their Super Bowl victory. It was a microcosm of what the Saints had been doing that entire season.

No team has parlayed Super Bowl interceptions as successfully as the Buccaneers in Super Bowl XXXVII. Tampa Bay turned that game into a pick-six party, setting a Super Bowl record by returning three interceptions for touchdowns during their 48-21 blowout of the Raiders. Safety Dwight Smith took two interceptions to the house, while linebacker Derrick Brooks had the other. Brooks' fourth-quarter pick ended any thoughts Oakland had of coming back after it had closed a 34-3 deficit to 34-21. He still remembers the play as if it happened yesterday.

"They lined up in a formation that they had shown a lot," says Brooks. "I remember dropping back, and the defensive line did a great job of making Rich Gannon step up in the pocket. When he stepped up, he couldn't see me.

"I prided myself on being able to read a quarterback's eyes. He never saw me break on the ball. I actually broke before he threw it. The first thing I had to do was make sure I didn't drop it. Once I got my hands on the ball, I knew what to do with it. The closer I got to the end zone, one thing was going through my mind: 'Don't fall.'"

Of course, Gannon's memories of that game aren't as pleasant. After the Raiders fell behind by such a large margin, he had no choice but to keep throwing.

"When you get in that mode, now you're forcing things, trying to fit throws into tighter spots, taking more chances," he says. "We didn't play well offensively or defensively that day, and we put ourselves in that position. It's not something you want to be remembered for, but I understand the circumstances. We made mistakes, and the Buccaneers capitalized in a big way."

Brooks believes great NFL defenses put an emphasis on scoring off turnovers. When the Buccaneers won the Super Bowl, bringing back interceptions for touchdowns was part of their modus operandi all year.

"That's what separates a good defense from a dominant defense," he says. "A dominant defense can do it all.

"When Jon Gruden became our coach, he issued a challenge. 'You guys have put up some impressive numbers,' he said. 'But have you scored touchdowns? Have you had game-changing plays, instead of just game-changing performances?'

"That was the one thing lacking in our defense up to that time. It hit a nerve with me. If our defense was that great, why weren't we scoring more touchdowns? That kind of became our theme going into the year."

A pick-six that happens late during a tight game, like Porter's interception against Manning, is particularly devastating to the team making the mistake. But in the Super Bowl, it hasn't mattered if an interception-return touchdown happened early or late. Whenever it happened, it meant victory for the team fortunate enough to get one.

"It's a major play, and I had a few in my career, so I should know," says Esiason. "I threw Rod Woodson's first career interception. I threw one to Eric Allen when I was with the Jets. And I threw one to Troy Vincent when I was with the Jets and he was with the Dolphins. All three of them ended up costing us the game.

"They all happened at different points in the game, but it's amazing how that one statistic usually translates to a win. It's a momentum killer. And when it happens for your team, it's a momentum builder. It's one of the most important plays in football."

And, if recent trends continue, it's a play you may see again in Super Bowl XLVI.

Clifton Brown has been an NFL writer with Sporting News *since 2007. Before that, he spent 19 years at* The New York Times *covering the NFL, the NBA, and professional golf.*

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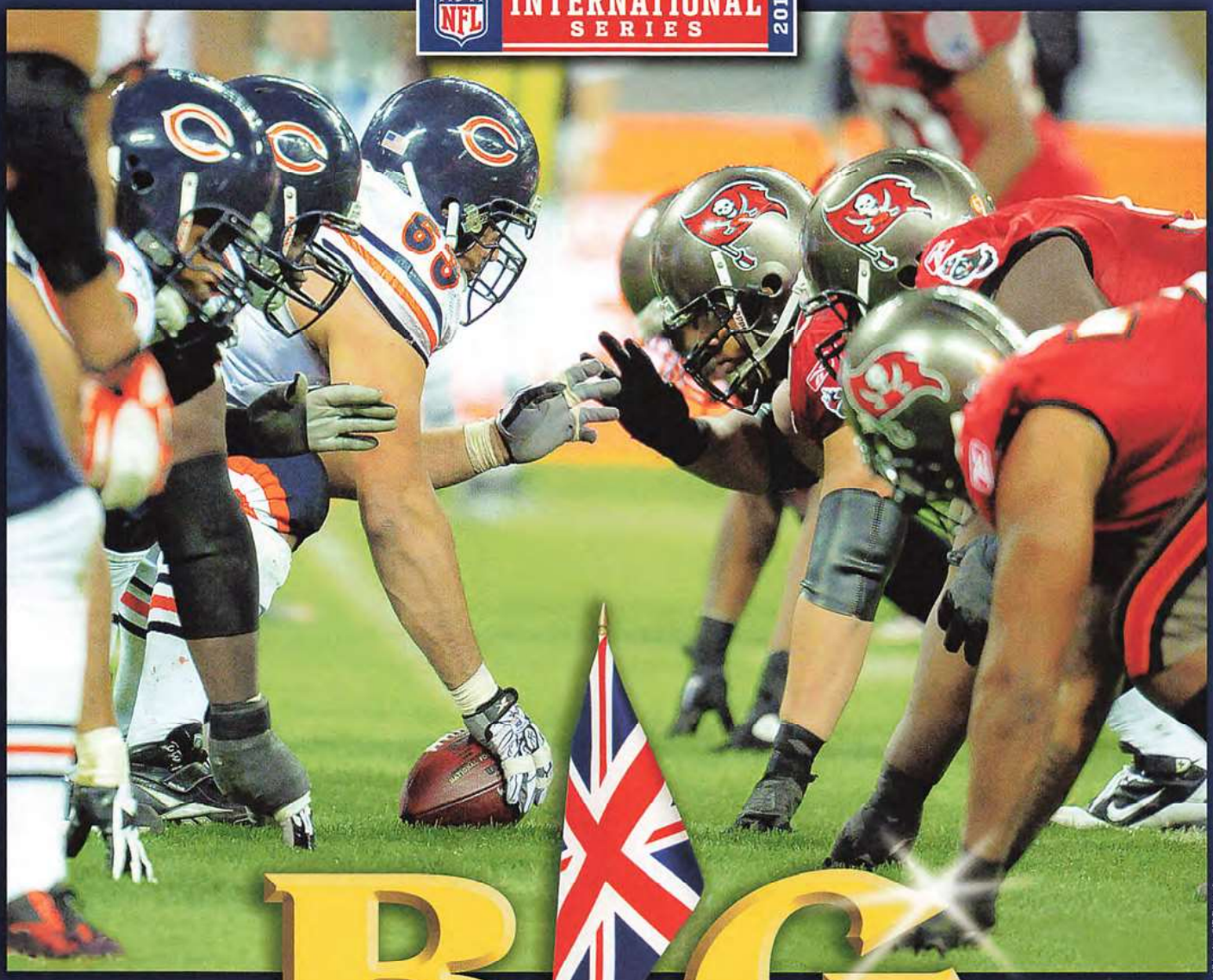


Kirby Lee/US Presswire

BIG IN BRITAIN

STRONG RESPONSE TO LEAGUE'S INTERNATIONAL SERIES HAS GAMES COMING BACK TO THE U.K. THROUGH 2016.

by Vince Casey

✦ The NFL is OK in the U.K. ✦ In fact, things are so promising in the United Kingdom that the NFL has extended its stay there for another five years. ✦ NFL fan interest in Britain has burgeoned, television ratings have climbed, and youth leagues have sprouted since the league initiated its International Series of annual regular-season games in 2006. ✦

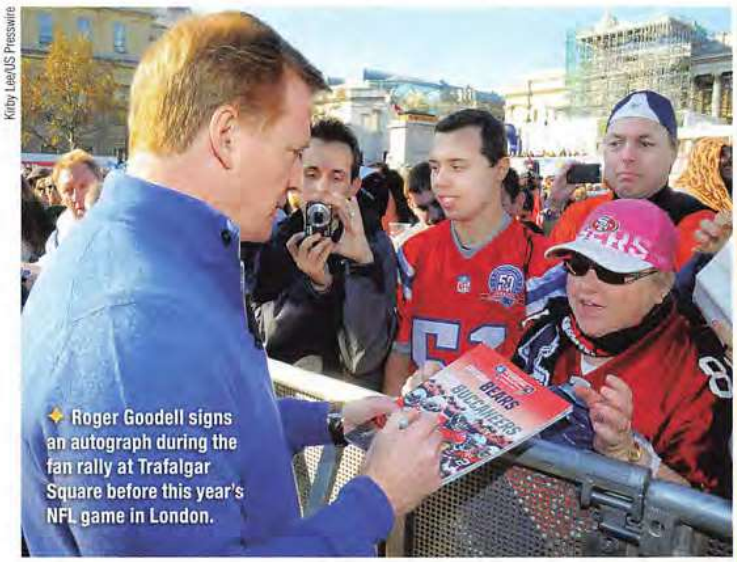
So it seemed only natural that NFL owners would vote to continue playing games in the United Kingdom through the 2016 season. The approval, made during the league's fall meeting, authorized regular-season games there in each of the next five years, with the leeway to increase the number of games per season, the host cities, and the competing teams.

"The response to NFL games being played in the U.K. continues to be exceptional," says NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell. "Because of the outstanding support of our British fans, we are confident that hosting additional games there will be well-received and support our goal of bringing football to more fans in the U.K. and beyond."

The new resolution allows teams to volunteer to play at least one regular-season game per year as a home team in the U.K. The league would determine the appropriate number of games per season, based on the popularity of the sport in the targeted market and the number of teams that volunteer.

In 2006, NFL owners first approved the International Series, which called for up to two overseas regular-season games each year from 2007-11. The resolution that passed last October is U.K.-focused, where fan interest has proven strong.

Kirby Lee/US Presswire



✦ Roger Goodell signs an autograph during the fan rally at Trafalgar Square before this year's NFL game in London.

"There are a number of teams interested in coming to Britain," says Commissioner Goodell. "We're not having to ask teams to do it. We're actually having to tell teams, 'Sorry, there's too much interest.'"

In the International Series, one club volunteers to be the home team and thus benefits from the impressive attendance the series has produced at London's famed Wembley Stadium (an average of 81,916 fans).

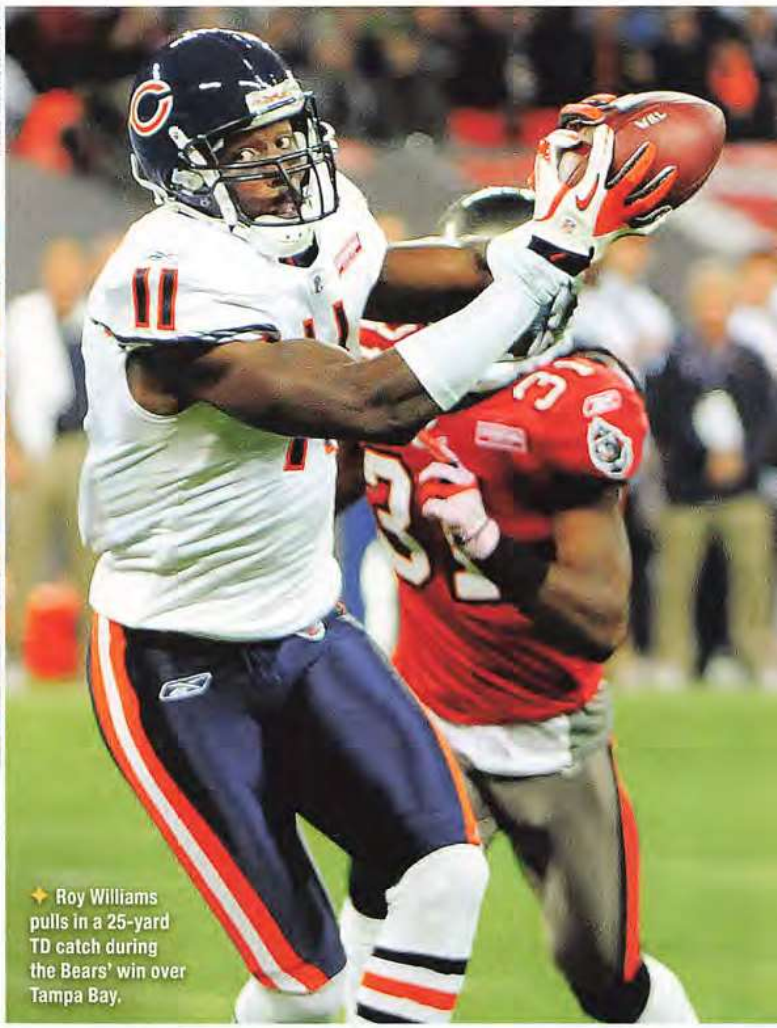
"We saw how excited people in the U.K. were about American football at all levels, whether watching the NFL or playing for or supporting their local team," says John York, co-chairman/owner of the San Francisco 49ers, the home team in London in 2010 against Denver.

That excitement York touts has grown remarkably with the advent of the International Series. The games—which began with the New York Giants facing Miami in 2007 and also have included San Diego vs. New Orleans in 2008, New England vs. Tampa Bay in 2009, and Chicago vs. Tampa Bay last October—have contributed to increased NFL fan commitment across Britain. Of the current fan base of 11 million, more than two million describe themselves as avid fans—representing a 32 percent increase in that category over the past two years. Participation in the sport at all levels in the U.K. is growing by 10-15 percent per year.

Television ratings also have shown tremendous growth. Sunday viewership of the NFL in Britain has jumped by 91 percent, and the league's Super Bowl audience has increased by 74 percent since 2006. Meanwhile, the league continues to develop new and stronger business partnerships.

With this kind of interest, "We think there's a tremendous benefit for a team to return to the U.K. on an annual basis," says Chris Parsons, the NFL's vice president of international.

Richard Mackson/US Presswire



✦ Roy Williams pulls in a 25-yard TD catch during the Bears' win over Tampa Bay.

Back in 1983, the NFL was an unknown sports entity in Britain. It was then that a fledgling TV station, Channel 4, had the idea—a great one as it turned out—to air NFL games for the first time on British "telly." Each week, the new channel would show the best NFL game from the previous weekend, removing all advertising breaks while cutting the game down to a crisp 45 minutes.

"Soon this new sport captured the imagination of the country, to the point that, three years later, it seemed the entire nation stayed up for the midnight kickoff of Super Bowl XX (in January 1986) to watch the Chicago Bears beat New England," says Henry Hodgson, an Englishman who is an editor for NFL.com.

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That August, an astounding 82,699 fans turned out at Wembley to see the Bears face the Dallas Cowboys in the debut of the NFL's American Bowl series that would feature 40 international preseason games in 12 cities—eight of those played in London—over the next 20 years. Other markets included Tokyo, Berlin, Barcelona, Montreal, Vancouver, and even Sydney, Australia.

From those successes came the logical next step. In 2005, the first NFL regular-season game outside the nation's borders took place, with more than 103,000 fans on hand to see the Cardinals defeat the 49ers in Mexico City. The movement continues to grow. Now, along with the International Series, the Buffalo Bills are playing an annual regular-season game in Toronto. All told, 27 of the league's 32 franchises have participated in at least one game outside the U.S.

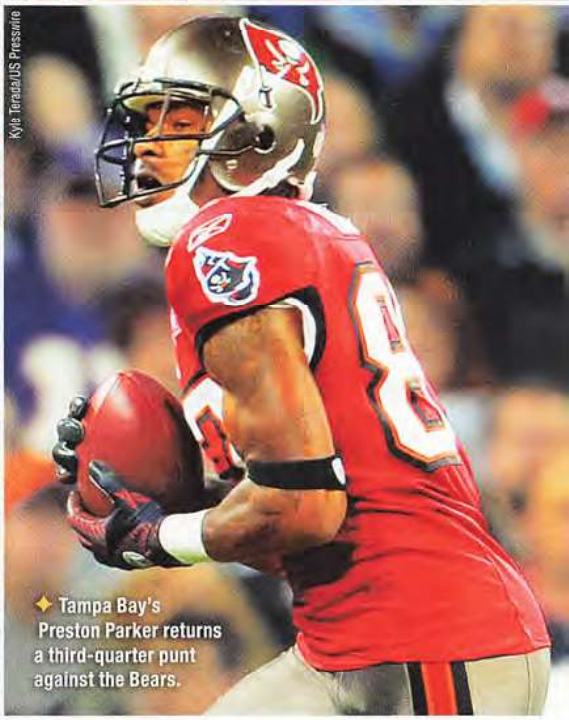
Proof of the surging U.K. football market was evident to the Bears, who, 25 years after playing in that inaugural American Bowl, appeared again in London when they faced Tampa Bay last October.

David J. Phillip/AP Images

✦ Pregame performers at this year's International Series game included the Goo Goo Dolls.

Kirby Lee/US Presswire

✦ NFL fans outside Wembley Stadium show support for their favorite teams.



Kyle Terada/US Presswire

✦ Tampa Bay's Preston Parker returns a third-quarter punt against the Bears.

The week of the game, "American football" received official recognition from the seat of British government with the launch of the "All-Party Parliamentary Group" that would act to promote the sport in the U.K., from the grassroots level all the way to the NFL.

"There is strong support for American football within Parliament, and a group of us felt that we should get more involved in developing the sport here at both the amateur and professional levels," says Member of Parliament Richard Fuller.

The people who are already "in on the secret" of American football in Britain have had no problem getting "involved," as MP Fuller terms it. This season, it even spurred a sort of sports exchange program. Chicago and Tampa Bay—representatives of America's top sport—tried their luck in two favorite sports of their host country in the days leading up to the game.

The Bears practiced their batting and bowling techniques at the Oval, one of England's most hallowed cricket grounds. Meanwhile, the Buccaneers' offensive line squared off in a "scrum" against members of the Northampton Saints Rugby Club (it was, after all, also the week of the Rugby World Cup).

"Coming to the U.K. is an exciting opportunity to showcase our talent on a different stage," said Bears defensive end Israel Idonije during the trip. "Our sport is great for bringing a new fan base to the game."

THE NFL ABROAD

RESULTS OF LEAGUE CONTESTS OUTSIDE THE USA (SINCE 1986)

INTERNATIONAL SERIES

Year	Location	Result
2007	London	Giants 13, Dolphins 10
2008	London	Saints 37, Chargers 32
2009	London	Patriots 35, Buccaneers 7
2010	London	49ers 24, Broncos 16
2011	London	Bears 24, Buccaneers 18

AMERICAN BOWL

Year	Location	Result
1986	London	Bears 17, Cowboys 6*
1987	London	Rams 28, Broncos 27*
1988	London	Dolphins 27, 49ers 21*
1989	Tokyo	Rams 16, 49ers 13 (OT)*
1989	London	Eagles 17, Browns 13*
1990	Tokyo	Broncos 10, Seahawks 7*
1990	London	Saints 17, Raiders 10*
1990	Montreal	Steelers 30, Patriots 14*
1990	Berlin	Rams 19, Chiefs 3*
1991	London	Bills 17, Eagles 13*
1991	Berlin	49ers 21, Bears 7*
1991	Tokyo	Dolphins 19, Raiders 17*
1992	Tokyo	Oilers 34, Cowboys 23*
1992	Berlin	Dolphins 31, Broncos 27*
1992	London	49ers 17, Redskins 15*
1993	Tokyo	Saints 28, Eagles 16*
1993	Barcelona	49ers 21, Steelers 14*
1993	Berlin	Vikings 20, Bills 6*
1993	London	Cowboys 13, Lions 13 (OT)*
1994	Barcelona	Raiders 25, Broncos 22*
1994	Tokyo	Vikings 17, Chiefs 9*
1994	Berlin	Giants 28, Chargers 20*
1994	Mexico City	Oilers 6, Cowboys 0*
1995	Tokyo	Broncos 24, 49ers 10*
1995	Toronto	Bills 9, Cowboys 7*
1996	Monterrey	Chiefs 32, Cowboys 6*
1996	Tokyo	Chargers 20, Steelers 10*
1997	Dublin	Steelers 30, Bears 17*
1997	Mexico City	Dolphins 38, Broncos 19*
1997	Toronto	Packers 35, Bills 3*
1998	Tokyo	Packers 27, Chiefs 24 (OT)*
1998	Vancouver	49ers 24, Seahawks 21*
1998	Mexico City	Patriots 21, Cowboys 3*
1999	Sydney	Broncos 20, Chargers 17*
2000	Mexico City	Colts 24, Steelers 23*
2000	Tokyo	Falcons 20, Cowboys 9*
2001	Mexico City	Cowboys 21, Raiders 6*
2002	Osaka	Redskins 38, 49ers 7*
2003	Tokyo	Buccaneers 30, Jets 14*
2005	Tokyo	Falcons 27, Colts 21*

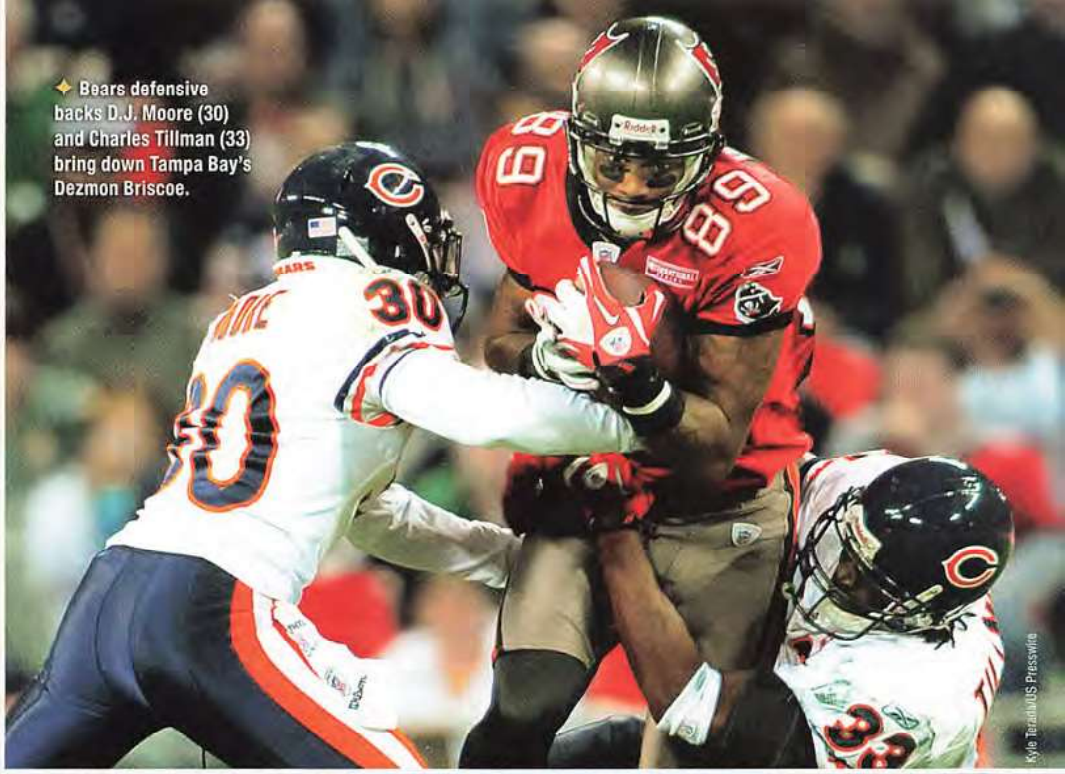
BILLS' TORONTO SERIES

Year	Location	Result
2008	Toronto	Bills 24, Steelers 21*
2008	Toronto	Dolphins 16, Bills 3
2009	Toronto	Jets 19, Bills 13
2010	Toronto	Bills 34, Colts 21*
2010	Toronto	Bears 22, Bills 19
2011	Toronto	Bills 23, Redskins 0

OTHER INTERNATIONAL GAMES

Year	Location	Result
1988	Goteborg	Vikings 28, Bears 21*
1988	Montreal	Jets 11, Browns 7*
1993	Toronto	Browns 12, Patriots 9*
2005	Mexico City	Cardinals 31, 49ers 14

** Preseason contest*



✦ Bears defensive backs D.J. Moore (30) and Charles Tillman (33) bring down Tampa Bay's Dezmon Briscoe.

Kyle Terada/US Presswire

✦ For the fifth straight year, London's Wembley Stadium opened its doors to the NFL's International Series game.

Kirby Lee/US Presswire

The trappings of the NFL bandwagon were exciting, too. Weekend festivities started with the American football movie classic *Jerry Maguire* being shown in London's famous Trafalgar Square on Friday night. That was followed by NFL Commissioner Goodell answering fans' questions at a "Fan Forum" at the Landmark Hotel league headquarters on Saturday morning. On Saturday afternoon, more than 40,000 people packed an NFL Fan Rally at Trafalgar Square.

On game day, there was the Tailgate Party with those in attendance soaking up the atmosphere while getting autographs from NFL legends and enjoying exhibits, games, Super Bowl rings and trophies, and "authentic American food." In the stadium, the Goo Goo Dolls performed, Noah Stewart sang "The Star-Spangled Banner," and Katherine Jenkins did her rendition of "God Save the Queen."

The game was pretty good, too. Matt Forté rushed for 145 yards and the Bears' defense grabbed four interceptions—one to stop a late Bucs threat—to support a 24-18 win.

If the past five years are any indication, this American football thing may turn out to be as "brilliant" (as the Brits like to say) in the U.K. as it's been to us all these years.

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MAGNOLIA | BEST BUY

THE SUPER BOWL NOTEBOOK

compiled by John Veneziano

WE'VE GATHERED A BUNCH OF STATS, FACTS, QUOTES, AND OTHER COOL STUFF CELEBRATING THE BIGGEST GAME OF THEM ALL.

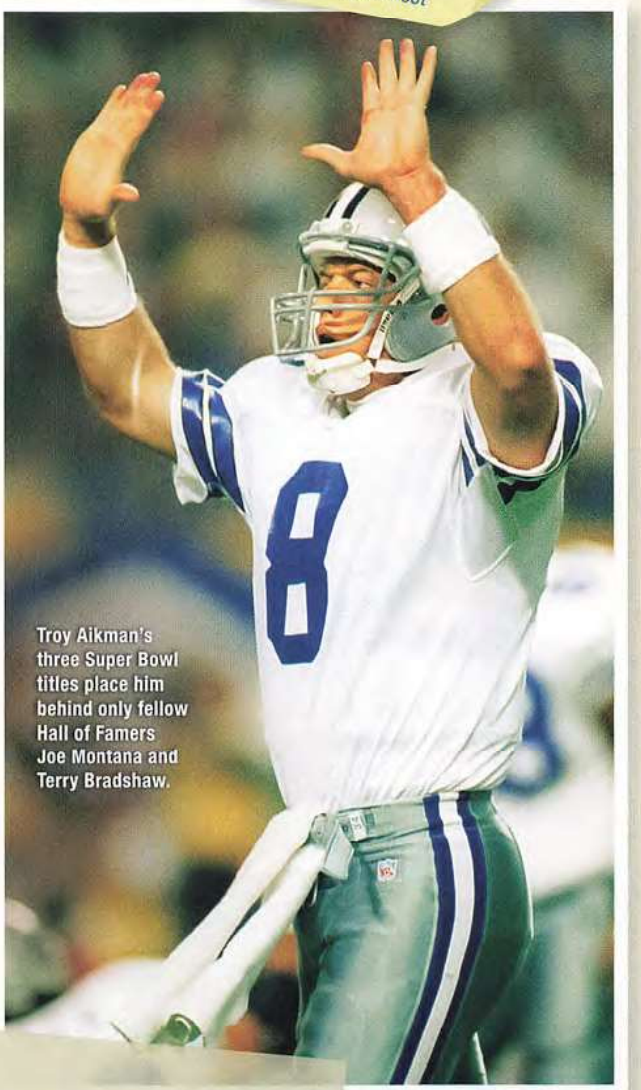
"These are days that define us as Americans: Independence Day. Mother's Day. Thanksgiving Day. And, of course, Super Bowl Sunday."
~Washington Post

THE QUARTERBACK QUOTIENT

With his victory in Super Bowl XLV, the Packers' Aaron Rodgers became the 29th quarterback to direct his team to a Super Bowl triumph and the 19th to earn Most Valuable Player honors. Below is a list of Super Bowl-winning QBs, with the games in which they received the MVP Award in italics.

NAME	TEAM	WINS	SUPER BOWLS
Terry Bradshaw	Pittsburgh	4	IX, X, *XIII*, *XIV*
Joe Montana	San Francisco	4	*XVI*, *XIX*, XXIII, *XXIV*
Troy Aikman	Dallas	3	*XXVII*, XXVIII, XXX
Tom Brady	New England	3	*XXXVI*, *XXXVIII*, XXXIX
John Elway	Denver	2	XXXII, *XXXIII*
Bob Griese	Miami	2	VII, VIII
Jim Plunkett	Oakland	2	*XV*, XVIII
Ben Roethlisberger	Pittsburgh	2	XL, XLIII
Bart Starr	Green Bay	2	*I*, *II*
Roger Staubach	Dallas	2	*VI*, XII
Drew Brees	New Orleans	1	*XLIV*
Len Dawson	Kansas City	1	*IV*
Trent Dilfer	Baltimore	1	XXXV
Brett Favre	Green Bay	1	XXXI
Jeff Hostetler	New York Giants	1	XXV
Brad Johnson	Tampa Bay	1	XXXVII
Eli Manning	New York Giants	1	*XLII*
Peyton Manning	Indianapolis	1	*XLI*
Jim McMahon	Chicago	1	XX
Earl Morrall	Baltimore Colts	1	V
Joe Namath	New York Jets	1	*III*
Aaron Rodgers	Green Bay	1	*XLV*
Mark Rypien	Washington	1	*XXVI*
Phil Simms	New York Giants	1	*XXI*
Ken Stabler	Oakland	1	XI
Joe Theismann	Washington	1	XVII
Kurt Warner	St. Louis	1	*XXXIV*
Doug Williams	Washington	1	*XXII*
Steve Young	San Francisco	1	*XXIX*

Doug Mills/AP Images



Troy Aikman's three Super Bowl titles place him behind only fellow Hall of Famers Joe Montana and Terry Bradshaw.

POINTS OF INTEREST

The **highest-scoring Super Bowl was XXIX** between the 49ers and Chargers, which produced **75 points** in a 49-26 San Francisco victory. The lowest-scoring Super Bowl was VII, when just 21 points were put on the board in Miami's 14-7 win over Washington that wrapped up the Dolphins' perfect 1972 season.

Courtesy of Pro Football Hall of Fame

MEN OF ALL DECADES

Only two players, Gene Upshaw and Jerry Rice, have played in Super Bowls in three different decades. Upshaw, inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1987, suited up at guard for the Oakland Raiders from 1967-1981 and participated with the AFL/AFC champions in Super Bowls II (1968), XI (1977), and XV (1981), winning twice. Rice, the NFL's all-time leader in career receptions (1,549), receiving yards (22,895), and touchdowns (208), was a wide receiver for the San Francisco 49ers, Oakland Raiders, and Seattle Seahawks. A member of the Hall of Fame's Class of 2010, he appeared in four Super Bowls, winning XXIII (1989), XXIV (1990), and XXIX (1995) with the 49ers, and was on the losing side in XXXVII (2003) with the Raiders.

Paul Spinelli/AP Images

GET YOUR TICKETS

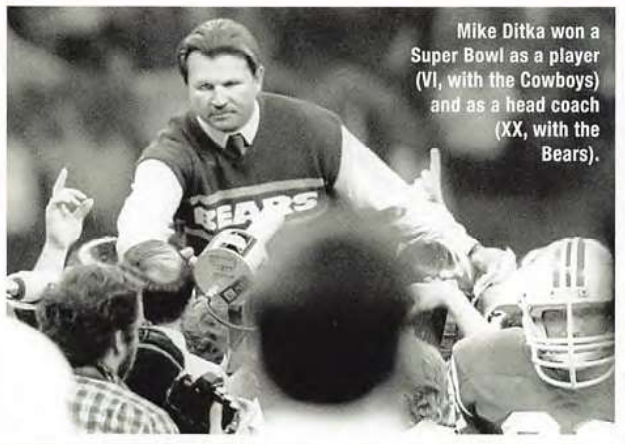
A Super Bowl ticket is a hot commodity. Here's a look at the ticket's face value price through the years:

Super Bowl I: $12, $10, $6	Super Bowl XXX: $350, $250, $200
Super Bowl X: $20	Super Bowl XL: $700, $600
Super Bowl XX: $75	Super Bowl XLVI: $1200, $900, $800

NFL Photos/AP Images

CHAMP VS. CHAMP

Super Bowl XLV marked a meeting of **the two teams that had combined to win the most Super Bowls** (9 total: 6 by Pittsburgh, 3 by Green Bay). Meanwhile, the last time two teams that had never won the Super Bowl met in the league championship game was 12 years ago in Super Bowl XXXIV, when the Rams and Titans squared off.



David Boss/US Presswire

Mike Ditka won a Super Bowl as a player (VI, with the Cowboys) and as a head coach (XX, with the Bears).

"The Super Bowl is about opportunity. To go from humble beginnings, to pursuing a dream, to becoming champion of the world. That's what it's all about—opportunity." *~Mike Ditka*

IT'S A FAMILY THING

There are 13 sets of fathers and sons who have reached the Super Bowl. And the father-son combo with the most Super Bowl appearances? It's the Grieses. Bob (father) and Brian (son) were part of five, including three times on the winning side. Here's the full list:

Father: Julius Adams, DE, New England (XX)
Son: Keith, LB, Philadelphia (XXXIX)

Father: Ross Browner, DE, Cincinnati (XVI)
Son: Max Starks, T, Pittsburgh (XL, XLIII)

Father: Jeremiah Castille, S, Denver (XXII)
Son: Tim, FB, Arizona (XLIII)*

Father: Frank Cornish, DT, Miami (VI)
Son: Frank, C, Dallas (XXVII, XXVIII)

Father: Bruce Davis, T, Oakland (XV, XVIII)
Son: Bruce, LB, Pittsburgh (XLIII)*

Father: Steve DeOssie, LB, New York Giants (XXV)
Son: Zak, LB, New York Giants (XLII)

Father: Tony Dorsett, RB, Dallas (XII, XIII)
Son: Anthony, CB, Tennessee (XXXIV); Oakland (XXXVII)

Father: Guy Frazier, LB, Cincinnati (XVI)
Son: Andre, LB, Pittsburgh (XLIII)

Father: Bob Griese, QB, Miami (VI, VII, VIII)
Son: Brian, QB, Denver (XXXIII)*; Chicago (XLI)*

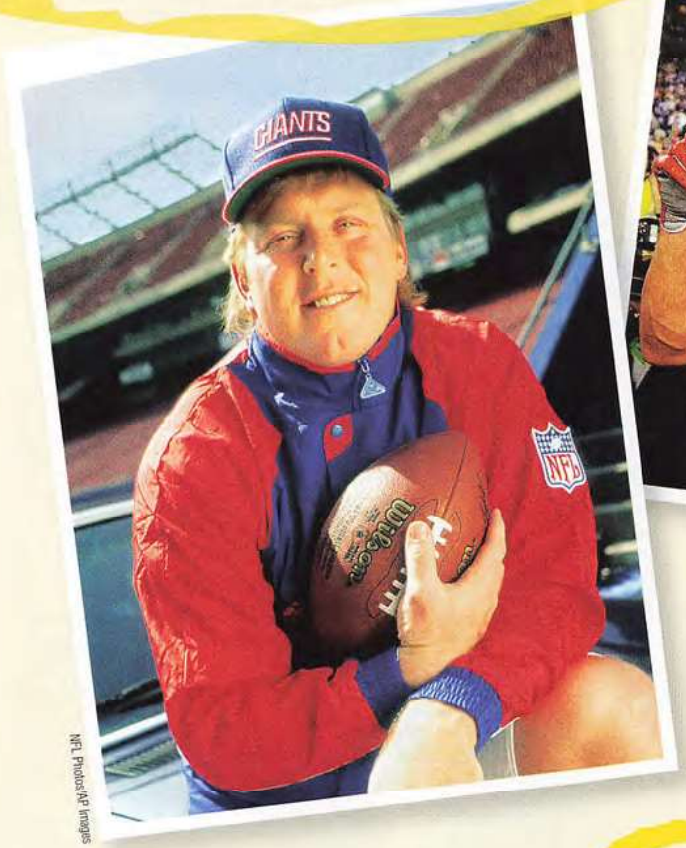
Father: Emery Moorehead, TE, Chicago (XX)
Son: Aaron, WR, Indianapolis (XLI)

Father: Don Hasselbeck, TE, Los Angeles Raiders (XVIII)
Son: Matt, QB, Seattle (XL)

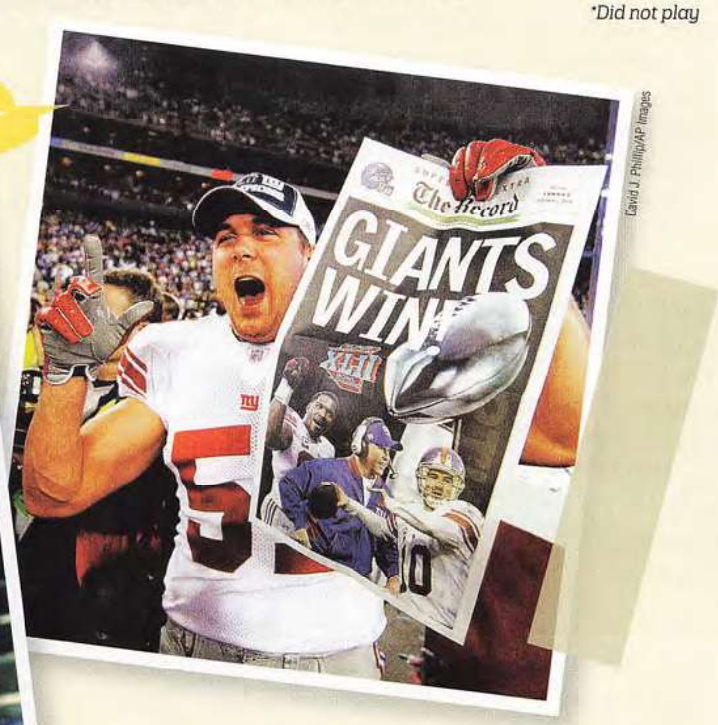
Father: Mosi Tatupu, RB, New England (XX)
Son: Lofa, LB, Seattle (XL)

Father: Manu Tuiasosopo, DT, San Francisco (XIX)
Son: Marques, QB, Oakland (XXXVII)*

**Did not play*



NFL Photos/AP Images



David J. Phillip/AP Images

KEEP THAT FLAG IN YOUR POCKET

There were **only two penalties called in Super Bowl X between the Steelers and Cowboys**, both on Dallas. While Pittsburgh won that game, the other three teams that didn't commit a penalty in the Super Bowl all lost: Miami (VI), Denver (XXIV), and Atlanta (XXXIII).

Referees were kept the busiest in Super Bowls XII (Dallas vs. Denver) and XXXVIII (New England vs. Carolina). Those games each had 20 penalties .

Joe Mahoney/AP Images

CANTON CONNECTION

Mark J. Rebilas/US Presswire

The Pro Football Hall of Fame's Class of 2011 is a Super Bowl treasure chest — the honorees combining for eight Super Bowl titles. Leading the way is tight end Shannon Sharpe, who won two championships as a member of the Broncos (XXXII and XXXIII) and a third with the Ravens (XXXV), and retired with league marks for receptions, receiving yards, and TDs for players at his position.

Richard Dent and Deion Sanders were two-time Super Bowl winners. Dent, a defensive end, was the MVP of the Bears' Super Bowl XX victory over the Patriots and later was part of the 49ers' Super Bowl XXIX title team, and retired with 137.5 career sacks. Sanders starred at cornerback for the 49ers in Super Bowl XXIX and for Dallas in Super Bowl XXX. He intercepted 53 passes in his career, nine that he brought back for touchdowns.

Running back Marshall Faulk — the first player in NFL history to total 2,000 yards from scrimmage in four straight seasons — rounds out the ring brigade. He played for the Rams' Super Bowl XXXIV title team.

Also inducted in Canton last August were LBs Les Richter and Chris Hanburger, and contributor Ed Sabol. Richter played with the Rams from 1954-62 and was selected to eight straight Pro Bowls. Hanburger spent his entire 14-year career (1965-78) with the Redskins, reaching Super Bowl VII. Sabol is the founder of NFL Films, which has garnered 52 Emmys.

> "Nationally, the economic impact of the Super Bowl is in the billions of dollars— from sales of TVs and recliners the week before (a five-fold increase) to antacids the day after (a 20% spike)."
> *~Wall Street Journal*

BACK TO THE BAYOU

Including Indianapolis, the Super Bowl has been played in 14 locations, but when **New Orleans hosts next year's game**, it will pull even with South Florida as the site of the most Super Bowls. Here's where the game has been held:

South Florida	10	Detroit	2
New Orleans	9	Houston	2
Los Angeles	7	Indianapolis	1
Tampa Bay	4	Jacksonville	1
San Diego	3	Minneapolis	1
Arizona	2	North Texas	1
Atlanta	2	Stanford	1

NAME THAT GAME

AP Images

Maybe it has always been "super," but it hasn't always been the Super Bowl. In its infancy, the contest was known simply as the AFL-NFL World Championship Game. The Super Bowl label didn't come until the game's third year, when the Jets met the Colts for the title. The name came from Lamar Hunt, owner of the Kansas City Chiefs, who was fascinated by the name and liveliness of a "Super Ball" that was a favorite plaything of his children.

Longtime Chiefs owner Lamar Hunt is credited with naming the Super Bowl.

Ed Rieker/AP Images

Vince Lombardi's immense impact on football was recognized when the Super Bowl championship trophy was named in his memory.

Malcolm Emmons/US Presswire

Commissioner of the NFL when it surged in growth and popularity, Pete Rozelle's name is now emblazoned on the Super Bowl MVP trophy.

Charles Knoblock/AP Images

ONE FOR THE THUMB, PLUS ONE

The Steelers hold the record for most Super Bowl titles with six (IX, X, XIII, XIV, XL, XLIII), while the 49ers and Cowboys are right behind with five championships each. Only one player has been part of five Super Bowl winners. That's linebacker/defensive end Charles Haley, who was with San Francisco for its Super Bowl XXIII and XXIV victories, and then played for the Dallas teams that took home the trophy in Super Bowls XXVII, XXVIII, and XXX.

ALL ABOUT THE HARDWARE

The Vince Lombardi Trophy is presented each year to the winner of the Super Bowl for permanent possession. It is a memorial to Vince Lombardi, the famous coach of the Green Bay Packers, who won Super Bowls I and II, plus NFL championships in 1961, 1962, 1965, 1966, and 1967. Following four years as the AFL-NFL World Championship Game Trophy, it was named for Lombardi in 1970.

The Lombardi Trophy is handcrafted of sterling silver, stands 21 inches high, and weighs approximately seven pounds. A stylized football of regulation size sits atop a three-sided base with convex faces. Crafted by Tiffany & Co., each trophy is valued at $25,000.

The Pete Rozelle Trophy, awarded to the game's most valuable player, was introduced at Super Bowl XXV. It is named in honor of former NFL Commissioner Pete Rozelle, who led the league for 30 years – from 1960 until 1989 – and oversaw the merging of the AFL and NFL and the creation of the Super Bowl. Giants running back Ottis Anderson was the first recipient of the Rozelle Trophy.

> "Wherever there's a Super Bowl, every player who has ever won one wears his ring. And the players who never won one say, 'Can I try it on?'"
>
> *~Carl Banks, who won two Super Bowls with the New York Giants*

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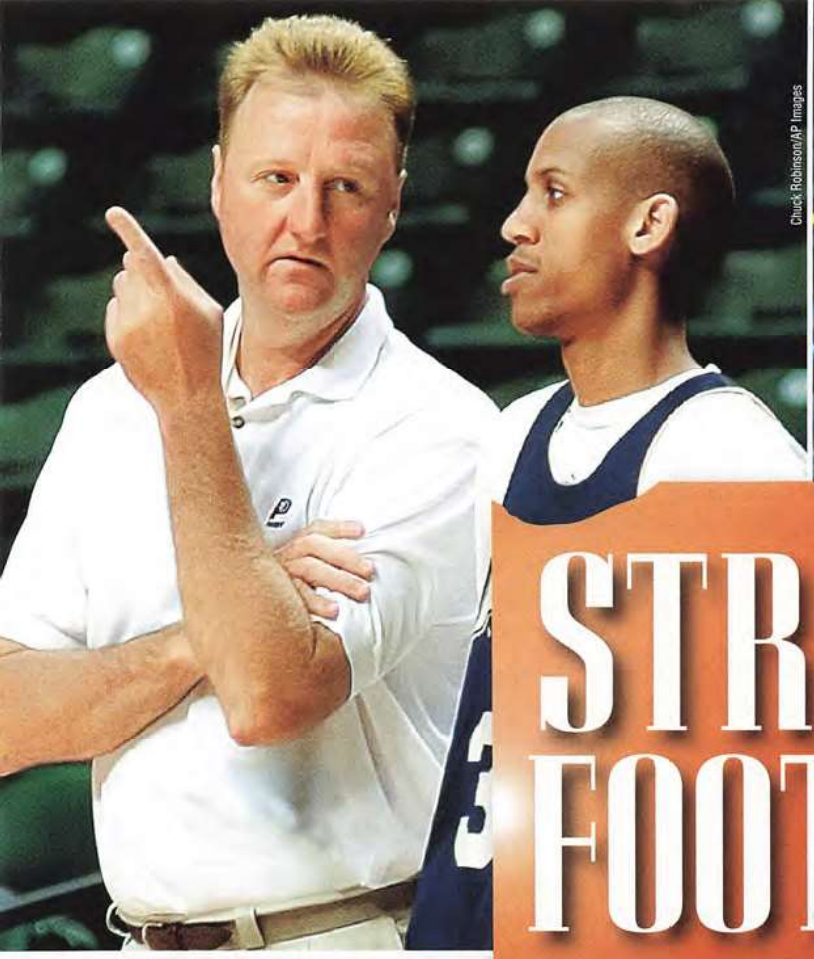
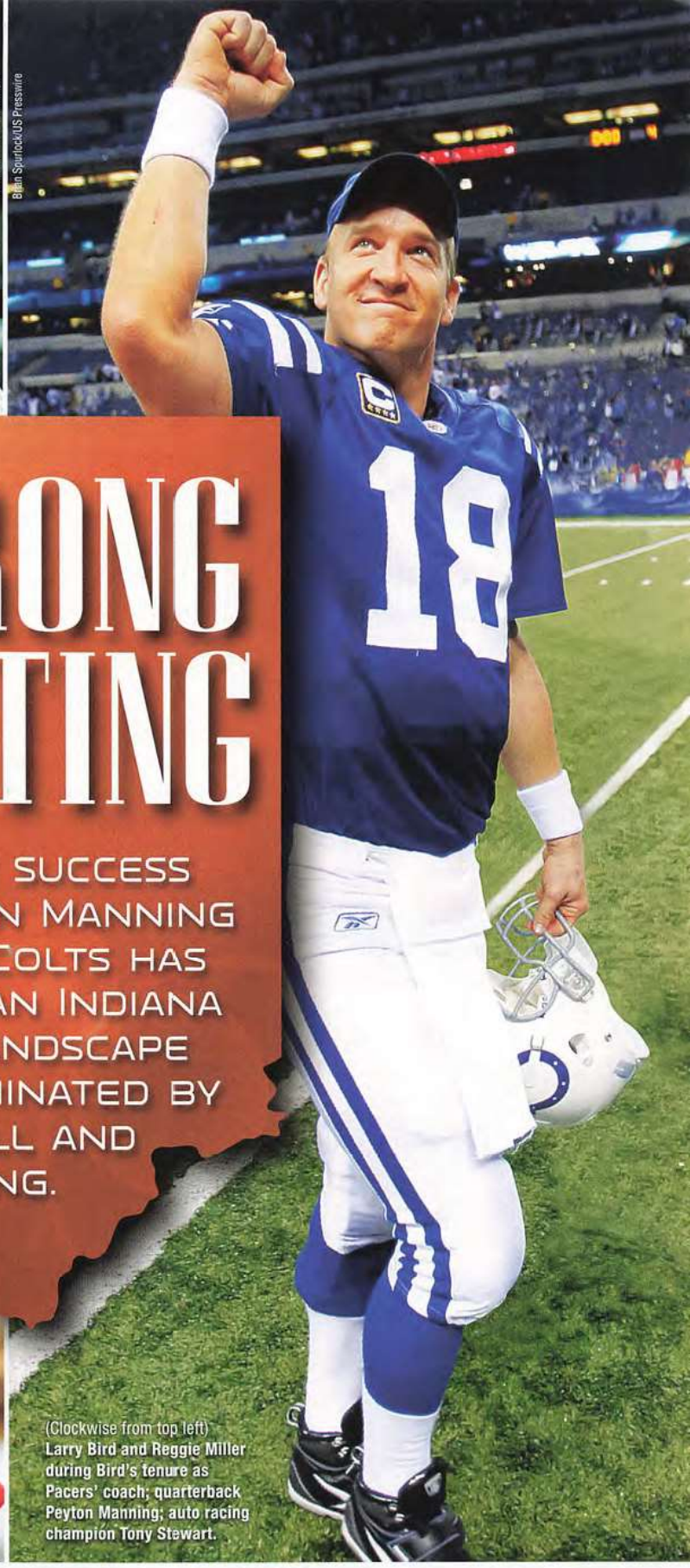


Chuck Robinson/AP Images

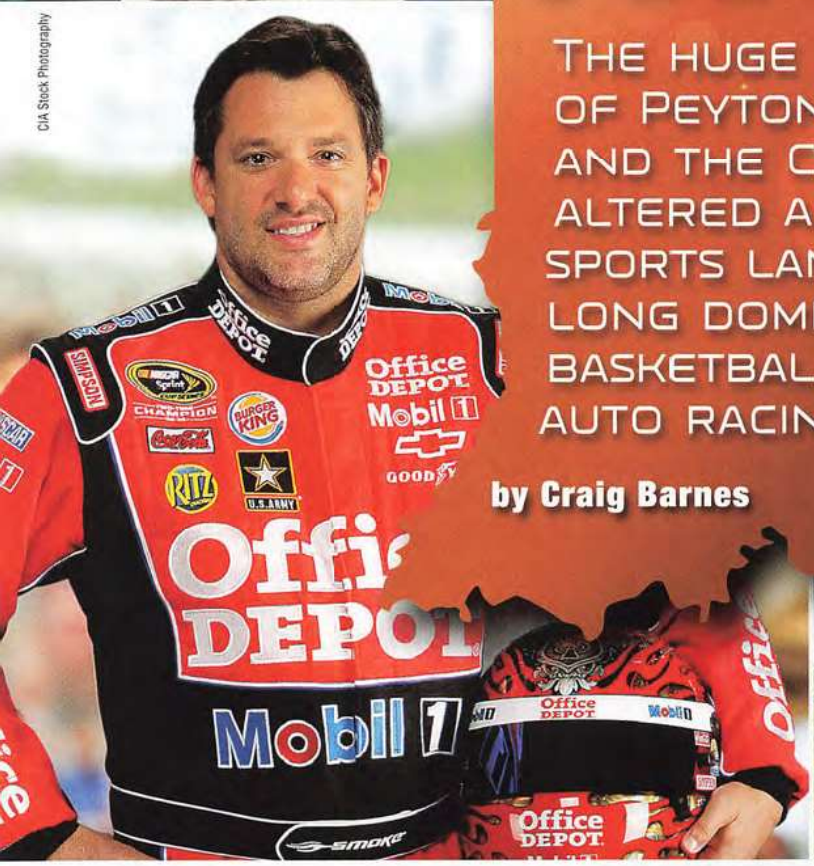


Brian Spurlock/US Presswire

STRONG FOOTING

THE HUGE SUCCESS OF PEYTON MANNING AND THE COLTS HAS ALTERED AN INDIANA SPORTS LANDSCAPE LONG DOMINATED BY BASKETBALL AND AUTO RACING.

by Craig Barnes

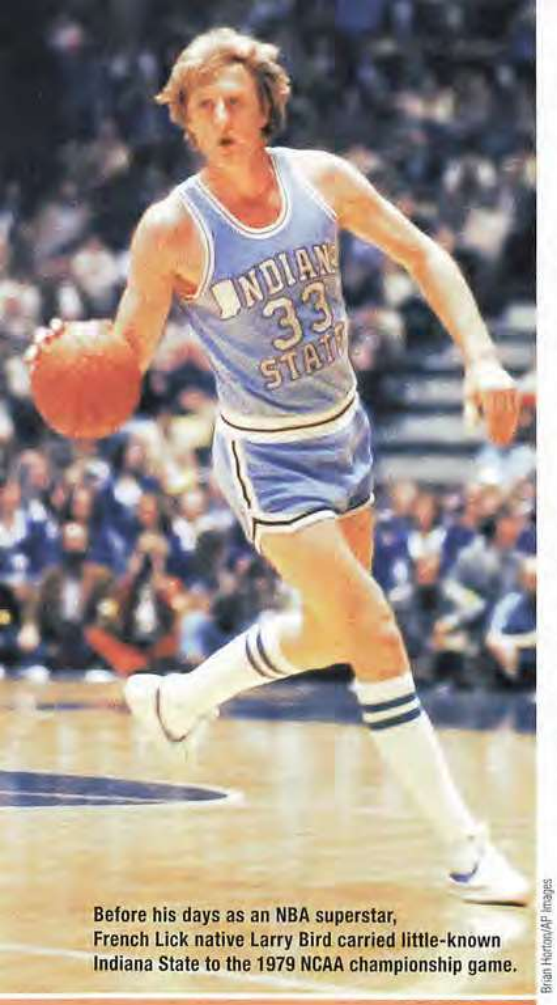


CIA Stock Photography

(Clockwise from top left) **Larry Bird and Reggie Miller during Bird's tenure as Pacers' coach; quarterback Peyton Manning; auto racing champion Tony Stewart.**

Many great NFL quarterbacks have been the catalyst of a team validating itself as a Super Bowl champion. Peyton Manning is the only one to also inspire a different feeling about football in a city and state.

"He has changed the way people in Indiana think about football," says Dave Frick, who, in his former position as deputy mayor, played a major role in the deal that brought the Colts to Indianapolis in 1984. "We have a different value system from the rest of the country, and he fits it perfectly.



Before his days as an NBA superstar, French Lick native Larry Bird carried little-known Indiana State to the 1979 NCAA championship game.

Brian Horton/AP Images

"Without the Colts and especially what they've done since Peyton became quarterback, we wouldn't be having a Super Bowl here."

Despite neck surgery that caused him to miss the 2011 season and leaves his future with the Colts or another team in doubt, Manning has firmly established his legacy. It will be as much about bringing the Super Bowl to Indianapolis as it will be about helping the Colts win a Super Bowl for the city.

"Winning the Super Bowl was great for our team, organization, and fans," says Manning, "but having it in Indianapolis benefits so many people. It means so much to the community's economy and pride. I couldn't be happier because Indianapolis deserves it."

In the days leading up to the 1998 draft—when the Colts made Manning the No. 1 overall pick—team owner Jim Irsay had a vision of what might be ahead.

"I thought, 'Just maybe this guy is that special guy every franchise needs,'" he recalls.

"He has been put in the position to help our team accomplish some unique things. With the help of great teammates and coaches, he has done them by performing and being tough on the field and humble off of it."

From 2000-09, the Colts won more games (115) and had more 12-plus win seasons (seven) than any NFL team. The highest of the many high points was Super Bowl XLI, when they beat the Chicago Bears, 29-17.

"At the parade following [the Super Bowl], thousands of people lined the streets in 15-degree temperatures," says Irsay. "I knew then we were in a golden era that every franchise hopes to have where greatness and magic prevail."

As one of the NFL's best quarterbacks, Manning has been at the heart of it all. He has a .678 winning percentage and has led the Colts to the playoffs 11 times and the Super Bowl twice. He is the only quarterback to total 40,000 passing yards (42,322) and 300 passing touchdowns (314) in a decade, doing it between 2000-09.

"If you had said in 1998 that we would be in two Super Bowls, win one, have a new stadium, and be hosting a Super Bowl," says Manning, "people would have thought you were crazy.

"It's a good feeling to be part of something that's resulted in the fans of Indiana having the same passion for football they've always had for basketball and auto racing. They just needed a team to get behind, and giving them a winner made it easy."

That team came in 1984 when the Colts relocated from Baltimore. They had modest success—with playoff appearances in 1987, 1995, and 1996—but the landscape and conversation changed drastically when Manning became the face of the franchise.

"Now people talk about the Colts year round," says Manning. "They want to know what players we'll draft, what free agents we'll sign, and what is happening in OTAs [Organized Team Activities].

"I'm not sure that was going on when we first got here," he adds. "Basketball and racing are still talked about a lot, but Indianapolis is a football town now."

This year, much of the conversation has been about Manning, and more recently, the team's future with or without him.

Almost immediately after being drafted out of the University of Tennessee, Manning helped the Colts become perennial playoff contenders and one of the NFL's elite teams. They won the AFC East in his second season.

"Before he arrived, Colts tickets weren't difficult to get," says Bill Benner, long-time *Indianapolis Star* sportswriter who also worked for the Indiana Sports Corporation and Indianapolis Convention and Business Association and is now with the Horizon League.

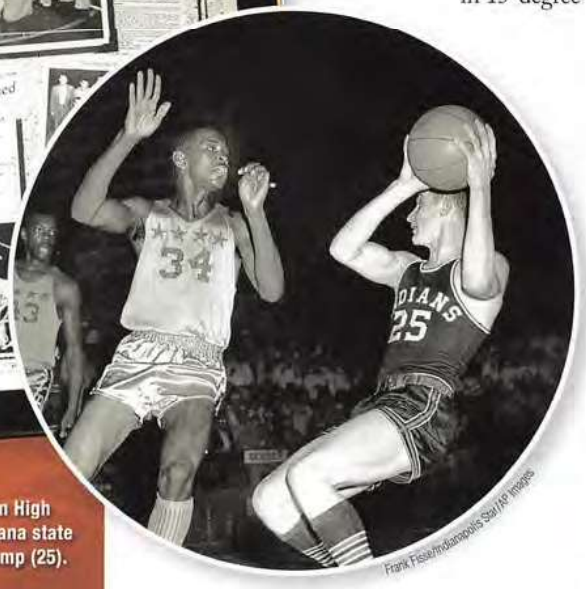
"Since then, the waiting list has been in the thousands, and now we're hosting a Super Bowl. Manning has been the linchpin."

As football has gained ground, the Pacers (the city's NBA's franchise) have ceded some

MILAN WINS STATE NET TITLE
Bebop, Paper Sack Bandits Conquered
Basket By Plump In Last 3 Seconds Nips Muncie, 32-30
And the New King of Basketball Was Crowned

The movie *Hoosiers* was inspired by Milan High School's unlikely victory in the 1954 Indiana state tournament and its star player Bobby Plump (25).

Darron Cummings/AP Images



Frank Fisse/Indianapolis Star/AP Images

Griese's Late Air Assault Rallies Purdue,
Shatters Notre Dame's No. 1 Rating, 25-21
Griese Rewrites Record Book With 19 Of 22
PURDUE STUNS IRISH, 25-21

Bob Daugherty/AP Images

Evansville-born and Pro Football Hall of Famer Bob Griese led Purdue to its 1965 upset of No. 1 Notre Dame.

Tony Dejak/AP Images

AP Images

(Top) **Fort Wayne native and Purdue graduate Rod Woodson was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 2009.** (Above) **Weeb Ewbank, born in Richmond, is the only coach to win championships in both the AFL and NFL. He was part of the Hall's Class of 1979.**

of their territory. They reached the league finals in 1999-2000, but have made it past the first round of the playoffs just twice since.

"We had three great teams in a row," says Larry Bird, the Basketball Hall of Famer who coached the team during that era. "After we lost to the Lakers in 2000, Chris Mullin, Rik Smits, and Mark Jackson all left the team."

Bird, who was raised in French Lick and starred for the Indiana State squad that made a magical run to the 1979 NCAA Championship Game, understands how the Colts benefited from the Pacers' struggles.

"They have one of the greatest NFL players ever," he says. "Peyton is a game-changer in every sense. I was never much of a football fan, but I watch him and the Colts all the time."

While Indiana State's time in the national spotlight was brief, Indiana University has a rich tradition and loyal following in basketball. Branch McCracken won NCAA titles in 1940 and 1953, and the legendary Bobby Knight added three more (1976, 1981, 1987) while never having a losing season in 30 years as the school's head coach.

More recently, Butler University—under the direction of young coach Brad Stevens—became the first Indiana school to play in back-to-back Final Fours. Stevens has seen the Colts' impact up close, attending several practices.

"They're a blue-collar team, like the people here," he says. "They know who they are, what they are, and how they're going to do things. And Peyton is arguably the best player in football at the most important position.

"Our community and state love basketball, but they also pull for the Colts. They think Indiana is the home of basketball, and they're biased in that regard."

High school basketball similarly runs through the region's veins. In 1990, a record crowd of 41,046 packed the Hoosier/RCA Dome for the single-class state championship game when Damon Bailey led Bedford North Lawrence to the title.

But in 1997-98, the Indiana High School Athletic Association, in a highly controversial decision, did away with the single-class event that began in 1911, replacing it with tiered tournaments based on enrollment. It hasn't been well received.

"It killed basketball for many people," says Bobby Plump, an Indiana basketball legend who in 1954 hit the shot that made Milan the smallest school to win the single-class state tournament. "We had a national treasure, and it was taken away."

Plump's last-second basket gave Milan and its 161 students a 32-30 win over Muncie Central (with an enrollment 10 times greater) and inspired the 1986 sports movie *Hoosiers*.

Bird never won the IHSAA tournament but insists the small schools loved taking their chances against the bigger ones.

"You thought that you could be the next Cinderella story," says Bird. "Basketball was everything when I was growing up. The tournament was a big deal. Now on Friday nights, fans line up to get into football stadiums. That's how it used to be for basketball."

Fans still line up to watch auto racing, especially the Indianapolis 500, a fixture on the American sports calendar for more than century. The Brickyard 400 was added in 1994. Not surprisingly, the Indianapolis area is home to more racing teams than any state.

"Racing cars in Indiana is as big as racing horses in Kentucky," says driver Tony Stewart, a Columbus native, "and the Indianapolis 500 and Kentucky Derby, two American classics, prove it."

Stewart recently won his third NASCAR Sprint Cup Series, adding to his titles in 2002 and 2005 to make him one of nine three-time winners. In 1997, he was champion of the Indy Racing League (IRL). He hasn't won the 500 but did capture the Allstate Brickyard 400 in 2005 and again in 2007.

He outdueled Carl Edwards in 2011 as his five Chase victories gave him the tie-breaker

Darron Cummings/AP Images

Jeff Klein/AP Images

Michael Conroy/AP Images

(Clockwise from top) **Olympian Michael Phelps competed at the 2009 US National Championships in Indianapolis. Members of the Indianapolis Indians celebrate their 2000 AAA World Series title. The Fever, the city's WNBA entry, reached the league finals in 2009 and owned the Eastern Conference's best record this past season.**

when both drivers finished with 2,403 points. Even more amazing is that Stewart entered the Chase without a regular-season win.

"If it doesn't go down as one of the greatest championship battles, I don't know what will," says Stewart, whose No. 14 car bears the same number as his childhood hero, A.J. Foyt, a four-time winner of the Indy 500.

Stewart grew up racing Midget, Sprint, and Silver Crown open-wheel cars and is the only driver to win championships in all of them. He moved to Indy cars and made his 500 debut in 1996, then began racing stock cars two years later.

"In high school, I was already racing all over the country, so I didn't have time for football or basketball."

Still, Stewart is a big fan of the NFL and college football and isn't surprised at the Colts' growing popularity.

"Peyton has an infectious personality that wins the hearts of fans and teammates," says Stewart. "He's made it easy for the people of Indiana to accept him."

And it has made Indiana embrace football at all levels. Manning's PeyBack Foundation sponsors the annual PeyBack Classic with two or three high school games, usually at the start of the season.

"High school coaches have told me that football doesn't play second fiddle to basketball like it did for decades," says Manning.

There's a good reason for that, according to the 75-year-old Plump. "We only had basketball, baseball, and track back then. Most high schools didn't play football."

According to the IHSAA, there were 770 high schools in 1954 and only 173 played football. Today, there are 410 high schools; 314 of them have football teams.

"A lot of Indiana kids follow the NFL more closely today," says Hall of Famer Bob Griese, the only Indiana native to quarterback a Super Bowl winner (Dolphins, Super Bowls VII and VIII), "and they see the opportunities.

"When I grew up in Evansville, it was easier to shoot baskets. We had a basket in the alley, and you didn't need anyone else. With football, you needed somebody else. You probably threw a wobbly ball, and they probably dropped it. They probably threw a wobbly ball back, and you probably dropped it."

During his years as a college football analyst, Griese often checked flip cards for Indiana natives. "Even in the Big Ten," he says, "I seldom found more than four or five on a team."

That doesn't necessarily mean the state's colleges haven't been ripe with talent. Indiana collegiate quarterbacks have combined to win nine Super Bowls, the most of any state. Joe Montana (4) and Joe Theismann (1) attended Notre Dame; Griese (2), Len Dawson (1), and Drew Brees (1) are all Purdue graduates.

The Fighting Irish, though, have always had more of a national focus than a state one.

"Notre Dame is as popular in New York, Boston, and Chicago as it is in Indianapolis," says Bob Kuechenberg, who played for the school's 1966 national championship team. "It's as close to America's college team as it gets."

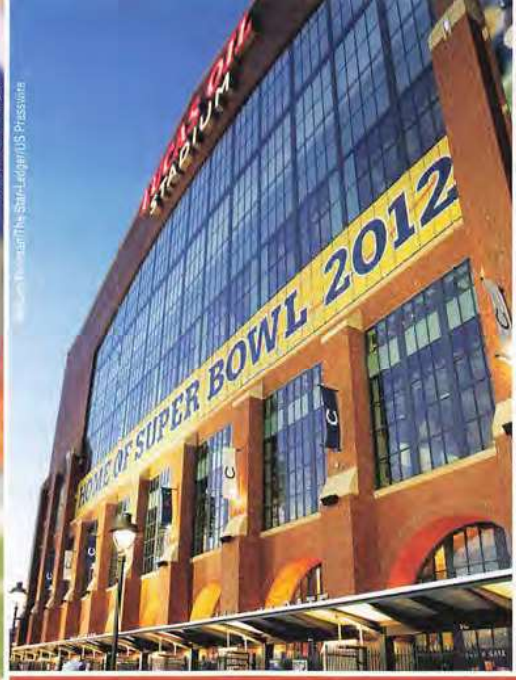
Kuechenberg, a starting guard for the Dolphins in Super Bowls VI, VII, and VIII, remembers schools in East Chicago, Gary, Hammond, Elkhart, Fort Wayne, Mishawaka, and South Bend playing good football.

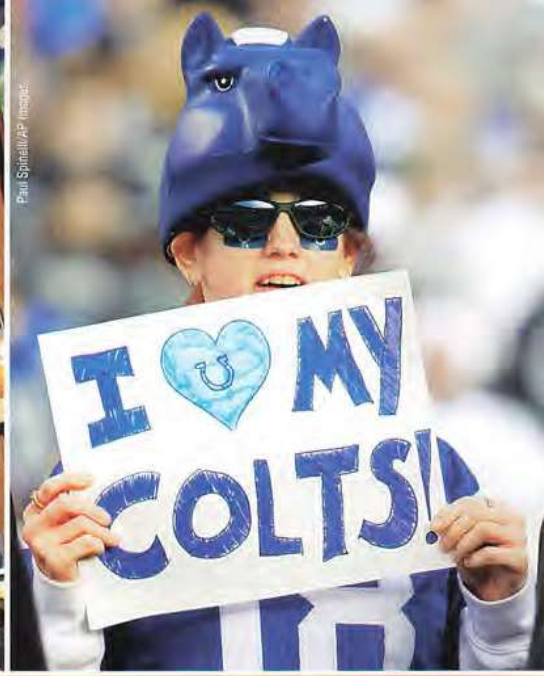
"Indiana was known for basketball," says the former Hobart High School star, "but the cities on the northern boundary were strong in football, too."

With the NFL's saturation, the 64-year-old Kuechenberg asks, "How could football not gain? Indiana now has the Colts and Manning. It makes sense it would produce more college and NFL players."

Two Indiana-raised quarterbacks, Jay Cutler of Santa Claus (now with the Bears) and Rex Grossman of Bloomington (with the Redskins) currently play in the NFL.

Today's IHSAA football playoffs allow all teams to participate. Since 2008, the finals have been played at Lucas Oil Stadium, and in that first year set a five-game attendance record of 56,050. Bobby Cox, commissioner of the IHSAA, attributes football's attendance surge to several factors.





(Left to right) **Reggie Wayne makes a cut during the Colts' AFC Championship Game victory that sent them to Super Bowl XLIV. Lucas Oil Stadium, site of Super Bowl XLVI. A Colts fan shows support for her favorite team.**

"The Colts are Indiana's team," he says, "and it doesn't hurt to have a role model like Peyton. Since 1998, a generation of fans with an allegiance to football has emerged.

"Coaches share more information, allowing techniques, strategies, and planning to improve. An increase in media coverage has also helped."

In 2009, the Colts signed a three-year sponsorship agreement with the IHSAA to keep the championship games—which were financially strained—at Lucas Oil Stadium.

"It's the grassroots role that we should play," Irsay says. "The people care about us, and I want them to know we care about them."

Those high school finals were Indianapolis' only championship football games for nearly two decades. But in the last five years, there have been two AFC Championship Games and the first Big Ten Championship (held in December). Now comes Super Bowl XLVI, the pinnacle of a vision born four decades ago.

The focus of the Indiana Sports Corporation, developed by a group of young executives who began meeting in the late 1970s, was to recruit sports organizations, teams, and events that would stimulate economic growth. Since 1979, there have been more than 400 national and international sporting events in the city with an economic impact exceeding $3 billion—a figure that doesn't include events at Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

"Sports are part of our DNA," says Susan Williams, president of the Indiana Sports Corporation. "When we get an event, many citizens feel left out if they aren't involved."

The Colts, Pacers, WNBA Fever, Indy 500, and baseball (with a Negro or minor league team for more than 100 years) give the city a solid base of professional teams and events. There also are 12 national sports organizations and nine Indiana associations headquartered in Indianapolis. The biggest and best known of those, the NCAA, arrived in 1999.

The city has hosted eight college basketball Final Fours—six for men and two for women—and a men's Final Four will be played in Indy once every five years through 2039.

"We have partnerships with our teams and organizations," Williams says. "(Former Colts vice chairman) Bill Polian was at the table when we presented our bid for the Big Ten Championship Game. That kind of unity matters."

Frick, an original corporation member, also oversaw the construction of Lucas Oil Stadium.

"We made our first Super Bowl bid in 1989. But the [Hoosier/RCA Dome] didn't meet the NFL's seating requirements, and Minnesota got the game."

Input was sought from the NFL for Super Bowls, from the NCAA for Final Fours, and from the Colts when the $720 million Lucas Oil Stadium was built.

"When we've hosted Final Fours," says Frick, chairman of the local organizing committee through 2006, "visitors wanted to know, 'How soon can we come back?' We expect the same thing to happen with the Super Bowl."

After losing out to Dallas for Super Bowl XLV, Indy was awarded this year's game.

"We had confidence in our presentation," says Allison Melangton, president and CEO of the Indianapolis Host Committee. "The right people were there to get the greatest one-day global impact and exposure event in our history."

Melangton believes Indianapolis' downtown grid and the city's history in hosting big events make it an attractive destination.

"Everything is connected and convenient," she says. "The airport is new (2008) and visitor friendly, and the city's mid-America location benefits fans. Most important, our volunteers and professionals know what big events take."

Irsay, who strongly supported the bid, offered some perspective on how the Super Bowl fits in the city's big-event résumé.

"The Super Bowl is the event of events," he says. "It isn't so much what the Super Bowl can do for a community. It's more what a community can do to make the Super Bowl a memorable experience."

Manning believes Indianapolis has all the resources to be a great host city.

"This is bigger than the 500 and the Final Four," he says, "but Indianapolis knows how to do it right. The downtown area is happening, and the close proximity of restaurants, hotels, and the stadium and convention center makes the city a natural."

Manning then adds a final prediction that's sure to have the locals smiling. "I don't think this will be Indianapolis' last Super Bowl."

Veteran South Florida-based sportswriter Craig Barnes brings his insight and opinion to the Internet at barnesburner.com.

GAMES

Most Games
6 – Mike Lodish, Buffalo, XXV-XXVIII; Denver, XXXII-XXXIII

Most Games, Winning Team
5 – Charles Haley, San Francisco, XXIII-XXIV; Dallas, XXVII-XXVIII, XXX

Most Games, Coach
6 – Don Shula, Baltimore, III; Miami, VI-VIII, XVII, XIX

Most Games, Winning Team, Coach
4 – Chuck Noll, Pittsburgh, IX-X, XIII-XIV

SCORING

Most Points, Career
48 – Jerry Rice, San Francisco-Oakland, 4 games (8 TD)

Most Points, Game
18 – Roger Craig, San Francisco vs. Miami, XIX (3 TD);
Jerry Rice, San Fran. vs. Denver, XXIV (3 TD); vs. San Diego, XXIX (3 TD);
Ricky Watters, San Francisco vs. San Diego, XXIX (3 TD);
Terrell Davis, Denver vs. Green Bay, XXXII (3 TD)

Most Touchdowns, Career
8 – Jerry Rice, San Francisco-Oakland, 4 games

Most Touchdowns, Game
3 – Roger Craig, San Francisco vs. Miami, XIX;
Jerry Rice, San Francisco vs. Denver, XXIV;
vs. San Diego, XXIX;
Ricky Watters, San Francisco vs. San Diego, XXIX;
Terrell Davis, Denver vs. Green Bay, XXXII

Most PATs (Kicking), Career
13 – Adam Vinatieri, New England-Indianapolis, 5 games

Most PATs (Kicking), Game
7 – Mike Cofer, San Francisco vs. Denver, XXIV;
Lin Elliott, Dallas vs. Buffalo, XXVII;
Doug Brien, San Francisco vs. San Diego, XXIX

Most Two-Point Conversions, Game
1 – by six players, most recently by
Antwaan Randle El, Pittsburgh vs. Green Bay, XLV

Most Field Goals, Career
7 – Adam Vinatieri, New England-Indianapolis, 5 games
(10 attempts)

Most Field Goals, Game
4 – Don Chandler, Green Bay vs. Oakland, II;
Ray Wersching, San Francisco vs. Cincinnati, XVI

Longest Field Goal
54 – Steve Christie, Buffalo vs. Dallas, XXVIII

RUSHING

Most Attempts, Career
101 – Franco Harris, Pittsburgh, 4 games

Most Attempts, Game
38 – John Riggins, Washington vs. Miami, XVII

Most Yards Gained, Career
354 – Franco Harris, Pittsburgh, 4 games

Most Yards Gained, Game
204 – Timmy Smith, Washington vs. Denver, XXII

Longest Run From Scrimmage
75 – Willie Parker, Pittsburgh vs. Seattle, XL (TD)

Highest Average Gain, Career (20 attempts)
9.6 – Marcus Allen, L.A. Raiders, 1 game (20-191)

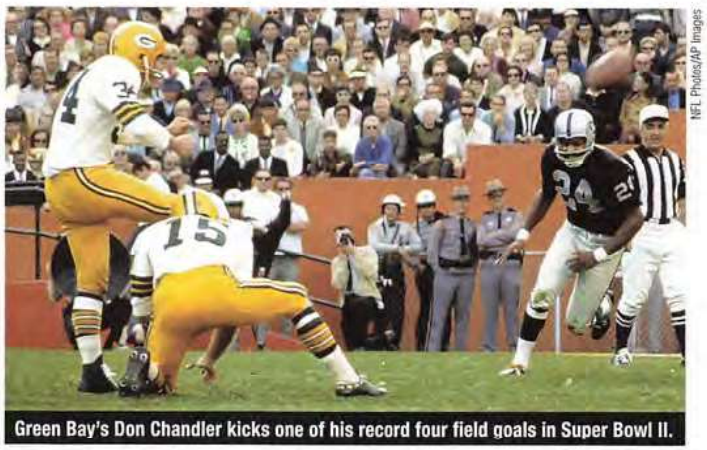
Highest Average Gain, Game (10 attempts)
10.5 – Tom Matte, Baltimore vs. N.Y. Jets, III (11-116)

Most Touchdowns, Career
5 – Emmitt Smith, Dallas, 3 games

Most Touchdowns, Game
3 – Terrell Davis, Denver vs. Green Bay, XXXII

Mark J. Terrill/AP Images

Pittsburgh's Willie Parker races for the end zone with his record 75-yard touchdown run in Super Bowl XL.



NFL Photos/AP Images

Green Bay's Don Chandler kicks one of his record four field goals in Super Bowl II.

John McDonough/NFL Photos

The 49ers' Roger Craig was the first player to score three TDs in a Super Bowl game.

O R D S

PASSING

Highest Passer Rating, Career (40 attempts)
127.8 – Joe Montana, San Francisco, 4 games

Most Passes Attempted, Career
156 – Tom Brady, New England, 4 games

Most Passes Attempted, Game
58 – Jim Kelly, Buffalo vs. Washington, XXVI

Most Passes Completed, Career
100 – Tom Brady, New England, 4 games

Most Passes Completed, Game
32 – Tom Brady, New England vs. Carolina, XXXVIII;
Drew Brees, New Orleans vs. Indianapolis, XLIV

Most Consecutive Completions, Game
13 – Joe Montana, San Francisco vs. Denver, XXIV

Highest Completion Percentage, Career (40 attempts)
70.0 – Troy Aikman, Dallas, 3 games, (56-80)

Highest Completion Percentage, Game (20 attempts)
88.0 – Phil Simms, N.Y. Giants vs. Denver, XXI (22-25)

Most Yards Gained, Career
1,156 – Kurt Warner, St. Louis-Arizona, 3 games

Most Yards Gained, Game
414 – Kurt Warner, St. Louis vs. Tennessee, XXXIV

Longest Pass Completion
85 – Jake Delhomme (to Muhsin Muhammad),
Carolina vs. New England, XXXVIII (TD)

Most Touchdown Passes, Career
11 – Joe Montana, San Francisco, 4 games

Most Touchdown Passes, Game
6 – Steve Young, San Francisco vs. San Diego, XXIX

Most Interceptions, Career
8 – John Elway, Denver, 5 games

Most Interceptions, Game
5 – Rich Gannon, Oakland vs. Tampa Bay, XXXVII

Amy Sancetta/AP Images

Phil Simms completed a record 88 percent of his passes while leading the Giants to victory over Denver in Super Bowl XXI.

Deion Branch is among four players to catch 11 passes in a Super Bowl.

US Presswire

RECEIVING

Most Receptions, Career
33 – Jerry Rice, San Francisco-Oakland, 4 games

Most Receptions, Game
11 – Dan Ross, Cincinnati vs. San Francisco, XVI;
Jerry Rice, San Francisco vs. Cincinnati, XXIII;
Deion Branch, New England vs. Philadelphia, XXXIX;
Wes Welker, New England vs. N.Y. Giants, XLII

Most Yards Gained, Career
589 – Jerry Rice, San Francisco-Oakland, 4 games

Most Yards Gained, Game
215 – Jerry Rice, San Francisco vs. Cincinnati, XXIII

Longest Reception
85 – Muhsin Muhammad (from Jake Delhomme),
Carolina vs. New England, XXXVIII (TD)

Highest Average Gain, Career (8 receptions)
24.4 – John Stallworth, Pittsburgh, 4 games (11-268)

Highest Average Gain, Game (3 receptions)
40.33 – John Stallworth, Pittsburgh vs. Los Angeles, XIV (3-121)

Most Touchdowns, Career
8 – Jerry Rice, San Francisco-Oakland, 4 games

Most Touchdowns, Game
3 – Jerry Rice, San Francisco vs. Denver, XXIV; vs. San Diego, XXIX

SUPER BOWL **RECORDS**

KICKOFF RETURNS

Most Kickoff Returns, Career
10 – Ken Bell, Denver, 3 games

Most Kickoff Returns, Game
8 – Andre Coleman, San Diego vs. San Francisco, XXIX;
Marcus Knight, Oakland vs. Tampa Bay, XXXVII

Most Yards Gained, Career
283 – Fulton Walker, Miami, 2 games

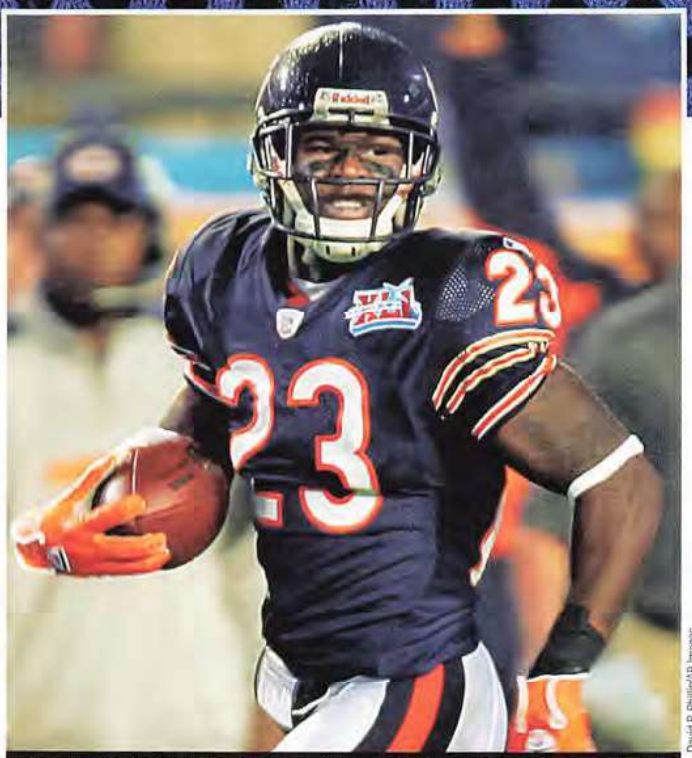
Most Yards Gained, Game
244 – Andre Coleman, San Diego vs. San Francisco, XXIX

Longest Return
99 – Desmond Howard, Green Bay vs. New England, XXXI (TD)

Highest Average, Career (4 returns)
42.0 – Tim Dwight, Atlanta, 1 game (5-210)

Highest Average, Game (3 returns)
47.5 – Fulton Walker, Miami vs. Washington, XVII (4-190)

Most Touchdowns, Game
1 – by eight players, most recently by Devin Hester,
Chicago vs. Indianapolis, XLI



David P. Phillip/AP Images

Devin Hester is the last player to return a kickoff for a TD in the Super Bowl.

PUNT RETURNS

Most Punt Returns, Career
8 – Troy Brown, New England, 3 games

Most Punt Returns, Game
6 – Mike Nelms, Washington vs. Miami, XVII;
Desmond Howard, Green Bay vs. New England, XXXI

Most Yards Gained, Career
94 – John Taylor, San Francisco, 3 games

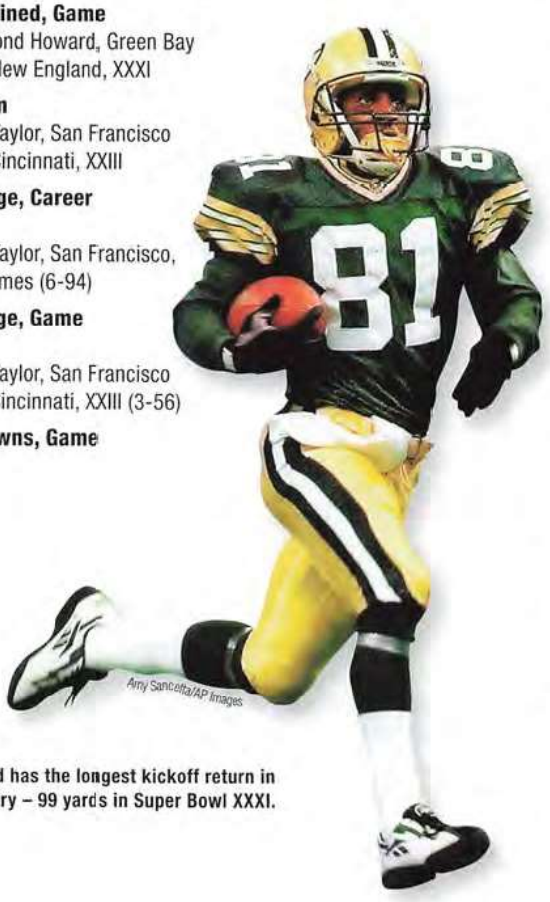
Most Yards Gained, Game
90 – Desmond Howard, Green Bay
vs. New England, XXXI

Longest Return
45 – John Taylor, San Francisco
vs. Cincinnati, XXIII

Highest Average, Career (4 returns)
15.7 – John Taylor, San Francisco,
3 games (6-94)

Highest Average, Game (3 returns)
18.7 – John Taylor, San Francisco
vs. Cincinnati, XXIII (3-56)

Most Touchdowns, Game
None



Amy Sancetta/AP Images

Desmond Howard has the longest kickoff return in Super Bowl history – 99 yards in Super Bowl XXXI.

PUNTING

Most Punts, Career
17 – Mike Eischeid, Oakland-Minnesota, 3 games;
Mike Horan, Denver-St. Louis, 4 games

Most Punts, Game
11 – Brad Maynard, N.Y. Giants vs. Baltimore, XXXV

Longest Punt
63 – Lee Johnson, Cincinnati vs. San Francisco, XXIII

Highest Average, Punting, Career (10 punts)
46.5 – Jerrel Wilson, Kansas City, 2 games (11-511)

Highest Average, Punting, Game (4 punts)
50.2 – Tom Rouen, Seattle vs. Pittsburgh, XL (6-301)

INTERCEPTIONS

Most Interceptions, Career
3 – Chuck Howley, Dallas, 2 games;
Rod Martin, Oakland-L.A. Raiders, 2 games;
Larry Brown, Dallas, 3 games

Most Interceptions, Game
3 – Rod Martin, Oakland vs. Philadelphia, XV

Most Yards Gained, Career
108 – Darrien Gordon, San Diego-Denver-Oakland, 4 games

Most Yards Gained, Game
108 – Darrien Gordon, Denver vs. Atlanta, XXXIII

Longest Return
100 – James Harrison, Pittsburgh vs. Arizona, XLIII (TD)

Most Touchdowns, Game
2 – Dwight Smith, Tampa Bay vs. Oakland, XXXVII

SACKS

Most Sacks, Career
4.5 – Charles Haley, San Francisco-Dallas, 5 games

Most Sacks, Game
3.0 – Reggie White, Green Bay vs. New England, XXXI
Darnell Dockett, Arizona vs. Pittsburgh, XLIII

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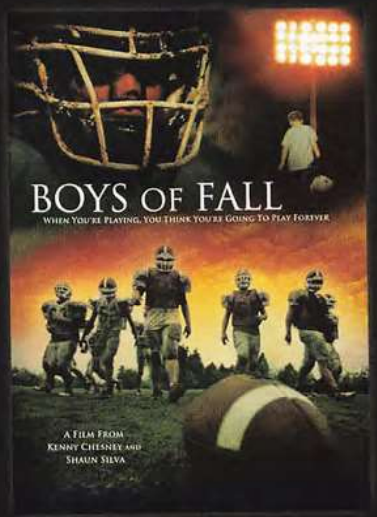

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UPCOMING NFL EVENTS COMING ATTRACTIONS

Darron Cummings/AP Images

Von Miller

FEB. 22-28
NFL SCOUTING COMBINE
nfl.com/combine

It won't be long before we're back in Indianapolis. Later this month, the next set of pro football hopefuls will bring their talents to the 2012 NFL Scouting Combine at Lucas Oil Stadium, and fans can follow it all on NFL Network. The coverage will feature player workouts and interviews with team coaches and officials.

Jason DeCrow/AP Images

Roger Goodell and Cam Newton

APRIL 26-28
NFL DRAFT
nfl.com/draft/2012

Round 1, Thursday (evening)
Rounds 2-3, Friday (evening)
Rounds 4-7, Saturday (morning)

The future starts coming into focus when teams make their selections at the 77th annual NFL Draft. Both NFL Network and ESPN will televise the three-day extravaganza live from New York City's Radio City Music Hall, and fans also can attend the event. In 2011, the Panthers chose Auburn QB Cam Newton with the No. 1 pick.

JULY '12
TRAINING CAMP
nfl.com/trainingcamp

Fans don't need to wait until the first game to start following their favorite teams and players. Once NFL training camps open in July, you can find all the news you'll need to know on NFL.com and NFL Network. Reporting dates, preseason schedules, detailed scouting reports, and daily updates from across the league are available as teams prepare for 2012.

Courtesy of Pro Football Hall of Fame

AUG. 2-5
HALL OF FAME FESTIVAL
profootballhof.com/enshrinement

Come see pro football's greatest players receive the game's highest honor when the NFL's Hall of Fame Class of 2012 (announced the day before Super Bowl XLVI) is inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame. The four-day Enshrinement Festival in Canton is highlighted by the induction ceremonies and the annual AFC-NFC Hall of Fame Game – a tradition since 1962 – at Fawcett Stadium. To learn more about Festival tickets and group packages, call 1.888.310.HALL.

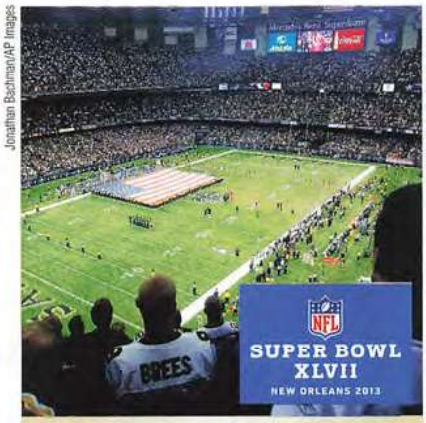
SEPT. 6
NFL KICKOFF
nfl.com/kickoff

The NFL's 93rd season officially starts Thursday, Sept. 6. As has been the case since 2004, *NFL Opening Kickoff Live* will take place at the home of the defending Super Bowl champion. The 2011 kickoff event at Lambeau Field included performances by Kid Rock, Lady Antebellum, and Maroon 5 prior to the Packers-Saints contest.

David J. Phillip/AP Images

OCT. 28, 2012
NFL INTERNATIONAL SERIES
nfl.com/international

As part of the NFL's highly successful International Series, the St. Louis Rams have committed to play one regular-season home game in the United Kingdom in each of the next three seasons. They'll start by hosting the Patriots on Sunday, Oct. 28, 2012, at London's historic Wembley Stadium.


Jonathan Bachman/AP Images

FEB. 3, 2013
SUPER BOWL XLVII
superbowl.com

The Super Bowl heads to New Orleans for a 10th time with next year's game at the Mercedes-Benz Superdome. CBS will televise the contest. Upcoming Super Bowl sites include New York/New Jersey (XLVIII) and Arizona (XLIX). To enter a random drawing for tickets, fans can send an entry via certified or registered mail (one per household) to:
Super Bowl Random Drawing
P.O. Box 49140
Strongsville, OH 44149-0140

2012 NFL SEASON SCHEDULES

AFC EAST

BUFFALO BILLS	**Home:**	Chiefs, Dolphins, Jaguars, Jets, Patriots, Rams, Seahawks, Titans
	Away:	Browns, Cardinals, Colts, Dolphins, 49ers, Jets, Patriots, Texans
MIAMI DOLPHINS	**Home:**	Bills, Jaguars, Jets, Patriots, Raiders, Rams, Seahawks, Titans
	Away:	Bengals, Bills, Cardinals, Colts, 49ers, Jets, Patriots, Texans
NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS	**Home:**	Bills, Broncos, Cardinals, Colts, Dolphins, 49ers, Jets, Texans
	Away:	Bills, Dolphins, Jaguars, Jets, Rams, Ravens, Seahawks, Titans
NEW YORK JETS	**Home:**	Bills, Cardinals, Chargers, Colts, Dolphins, 49ers, Patriots, Texans
	Away:	Bills, Dolphins, Jaguars, Patriots, Rams, Seahawks, Steelers, Titans

AFC NORTH

BALTIMORE RAVENS	**Home:**	Bengals, Broncos, Browns, Cowboys, Giants, Patriots, Raiders, Steelers
	Away:	Bengals, Browns, Chargers, Chiefs, Eagles, Redskins, Steelers, Texans
CINCINNATI BENGALS	**Home:**	Broncos, Browns, Cowboys, Dolphins, Giants, Raiders, Ravens, Steelers
	Away:	Browns, Chargers, Chiefs, Eagles, Jaguars, Ravens, Redskins, Steelers
CLEVELAND BROWNS	**Home:**	Bengals, Bills, Chargers, Chiefs, Eagles, Ravens, Redskins, Steelers
	Away:	Bengals, Broncos, Colts, Cowboys, Giants, Raiders, Ravens, Steelers
PITTSBURGH STEELERS	**Home:**	Bengals, Browns, Chargers, Chiefs, Eagles, Jets, Ravens, Redskins
	Away:	Bengals, Broncos, Browns, Cowboys, Giants, Raiders, Ravens, Titans

AFC SOUTH

HOUSTON TEXANS	**Home:**	Bills, Colts, Dolphins, Jaguars, Packers, Ravens, Titans, Vikings
	Away:	Bears, Broncos, Colts, Jaguars, Jets, Lions, Patriots, Titans
INDIANAPOLIS COLTS	**Home:**	Bills, Browns, Dolphins, Jaguars, Packers, Texans, Titans, Vikings
	Away:	Bears, Chiefs, Jaguars, Jets, Lions, Patriots, Texans, Titans
JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS	**Home:**	Bears, Bengals, Colts, Jets, Lions, Patriots, Texans, Titans
	Away:	Bills, Colts, Dolphins, Packers, Raiders, Texans, Titans, Vikings
TENNESSEE TITANS	**Home:**	Bears, Colts, Jaguars, Jets, Lions, Patriots, Steelers, Texans
	Away:	Bills, Chargers, Colts, Dolphins, Jaguars, Packers, Texans, Vikings

AFC WEST

DENVER BRONCOS	**Home:**	Browns, Buccaneers, Chargers, Chiefs, Raiders, Saints, Steelers, Texans
	Away:	Bengals, Chargers, Chiefs, Falcons, Panthers, Patriots, Raiders, Ravens
KANSAS CITY CHIEFS	**Home:**	Bengals, Broncos, Chargers, Colts, Falcons, Panthers, Raiders, Ravens
	Away:	Bills, Broncos, Browns, Buccaneers, Chargers, Raiders, Saints, Steelers
OAKLAND RAIDERS	**Home:**	Broncos, Browns, Buccaneers, Chargers, Chiefs, Jaguars, Saints, Steelers
	Away:	Bengals, Broncos, Chargers, Chiefs, Dolphins, Falcons, Panthers, Ravens
SAN DIEGO CHARGERS	**Home:**	Bengals, Broncos, Chiefs, Falcons, Panthers, Raiders, Ravens, Titans
	Away:	Broncos, Browns, Buccaneers, Chiefs, Jets, Raiders, Saints, Steelers

NFC EAST

DALLAS COWBOYS	**Home:**	Bears, Browns, Buccaneers, Eagles, Giants, Redskins, Saints, Steelers
	Away:	Bengals, Eagles, Falcons, Giants, Panthers, Ravens, Redskins, Seahawks
NEW YORK GIANTS	**Home:**	Browns, Buccaneers, Cowboys, Eagles, Packers, Redskins, Saints, Steelers
	Away:	Bengals, Cowboys, Eagles, Falcons, 49ers, Panthers, Ravens, Redskins
PHILADELPHIA EAGLES	**Home:**	Bengals, Cowboys, Falcons, Giants, Lions, Panthers, Ravens, Redskins
	Away:	Browns, Buccaneers, Cardinals, Cowboys, Giants, Redskins, Saints, Steelers
WASHINGTON REDSKINS	**Home:**	Bengals, Cowboys, Eagles, Falcons, Giants, Panthers, Ravens, Vikings
	Away:	Browns, Buccaneers, Cowboys, Eagles, Giants, Rams, Saints, Steelers

NFC NORTH

CHICAGO BEARS	**Home:**	Colts, Lions, Packers, Panthers, Rams, Seahawks, Texans, Vikings
	Away:	Cardinals, Cowboys, 49ers, Jaguars, Lions, Packers, Titans, Vikings
DETROIT LIONS	**Home:**	Bears, Colts, Falcons, Packers, Rams, Seahawks, Texans, Vikings
	Away:	Bears, Cardinals, Eagles, 49ers, Jaguars, Packers, Titans, Vikings
GREEN BAY PACKERS	**Home:**	Bears, Cardinals, 49ers, Jaguars, Lions, Saints, Titans, Vikings
	Away:	Bears, Colts, Giants, Lions, Rams, Seahawks, Texans, Vikings
MINNESOTA VIKINGS	**Home:**	Bears, Buccaneers, Cardinals, 49ers, Jaguars, Lions, Packers, Titans
	Away:	Bears, Colts, Lions, Packers, Rams, Redskins, Seahawks, Texans

NFC SOUTH

ATLANTA FALCONS	**Home:**	Broncos, Buccaneers, Cardinals, Cowboys, Giants, Panthers, Raiders, Saints
	Away:	Buccaneers, Chargers, Chiefs, Eagles, Lions, Panthers, Redskins, Saints
CAROLINA PANTHERS	**Home:**	Broncos, Buccaneers, Cowboys, Falcons, Giants, Raiders, Saints, Seahawks
	Away:	Bears, Buccaneers, Chargers, Chiefs, Eagles, Falcons, Redskins, Saints
NEW ORLEANS SAINTS	**Home:**	Buccaneers, Chargers, Chiefs, Eagles, Falcons, 49ers, Panthers, Redskins
	Away:	Broncos, Buccaneers, Cowboys, Falcons, Giants, Packers, Panthers, Raiders
TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS	**Home:**	Eagles, Chargers, Chiefs, Falcons, Panthers, Rams, Redskins, Saints
	Away:	Broncos, Cowboys, Falcons, Giants, Panthers, Raiders, Saints, Vikings

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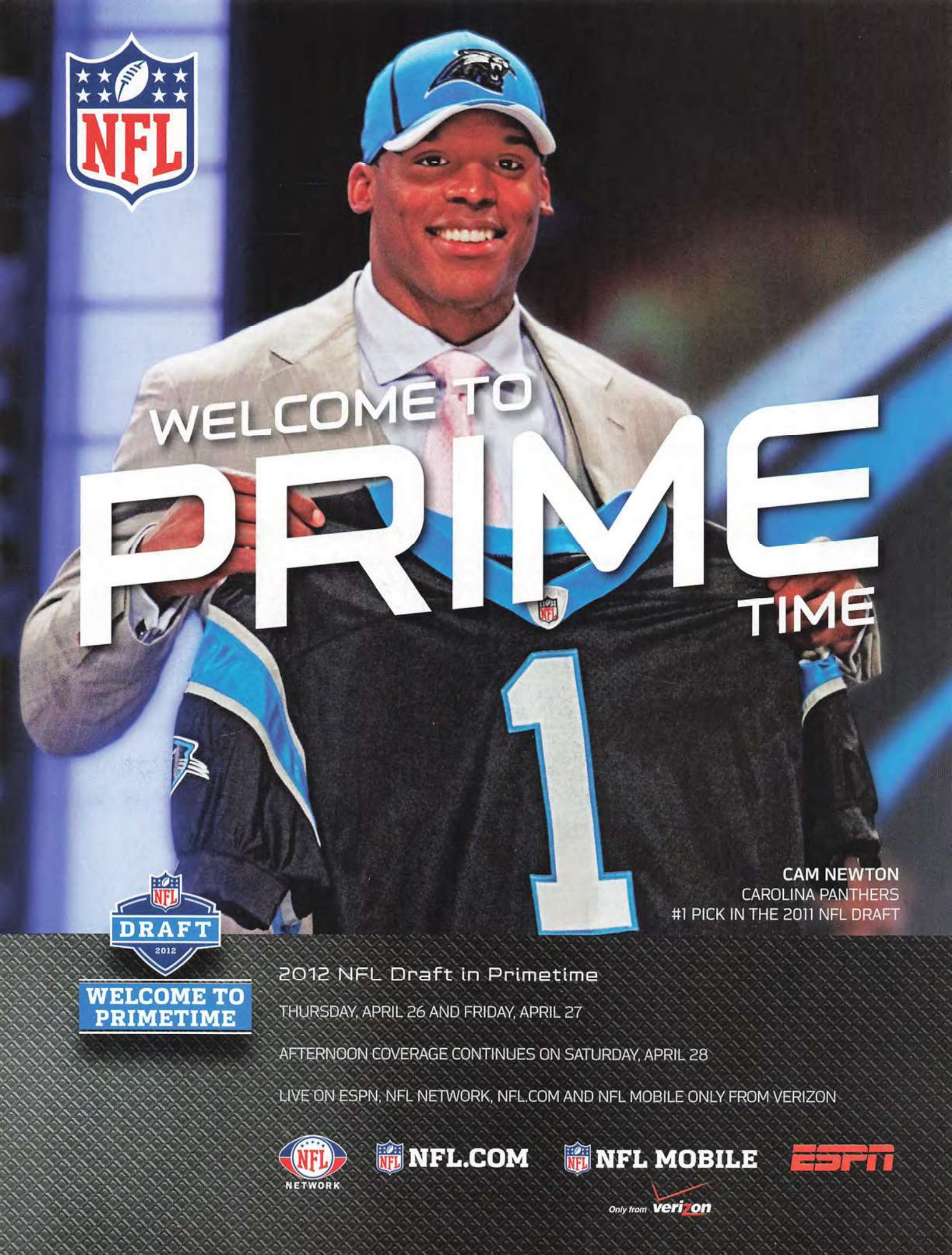
ARIZONA CARDINALS	**Home:**	Bears, Bills, Dolphins, Eagles, 49ers, Lions, Rams, Seahawks
	Away:	49ers, Falcons, Jets, Patriots, Packers, Rams, Seahawks, Vikings
SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS	**Home:**	Bears, Bills, Cardinals, Dolphins, Giants, Lions, Rams, Seahawks
	Away:	Cardinals, Jets, Packers, Patriots, Rams, Saints, Seahawks, Vikings
SEATTLE SEAHAWKS	**Home:**	Cardinals, Cowboys, 49ers, Jets, Packers, Patriots, Rams, Vikings
	Away:	Bears, Bills, Cardinals, Dolphins, 49ers, Lions, Panthers, Rams
ST. LOUIS RAMS	**Home:**	Cardinals, 49ers, Jets, Packers, Patriots, Redskins, Seahawks, Vikings
	Away:	Bears, Bills, Buccaneers, Cardinals, Dolphins, 49ers, Lions, Seahawks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SOME OF MY BEST FRIENDS BECOME MY BIGGEST RIVALS ON GAMEDAY.

Tavia Hunt (left) married to Kansas City Chiefs Chairman and CEO Clark Hunt.
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Taking Pride In Indy

by Tony Dungy

HAVING THE GAME HERE IS ANOTHER SUPER MOMENT.

Twenty-eight years. That's how long it took me to get back to the Super Bowl...and what a difference there was between the time I played in the game and when I coached in it.

In both cases, it was the culmination of a lot of hard work. I was a second-year safety with the Steelers when we made Super Bowl XIII, and I can remember going around Miami that week and being a normal citizen. Even though our team had nine future Hall of Fame players—as well as a Hall of Fame coach—we could go wherever we wanted to.

Tom Shuckland/AP Images

AP Images

My biggest moment during the game came with us leading, 35-24, when the Cowboys tried an onside kick that I didn't recover. Although we still won, my one regret was that I didn't do my job and ice things right there.

That day is still as clear as could be. People remember the Jackie Smith play, when he dropped a pass in the end zone, but he was a great tight end. John Stallworth had two early touchdown catches and was on his way to a monster game, then ended up getting cramps and couldn't finish. It also poured during the morning, but not during the game.

(I thought about that at Super Bowl XLI, also in Miami, when I was coaching the Colts. That day, it rained all afternoon *and* during the game.)

After we won, it was tempting to take that kind of success for granted. I thought, "This is easy, the Steelers' third Super Bowl in five years. This is how it's supposed to be. You get with a good team and do things right, and you win."

Then I got traded to San Francisco. And while the Steelers went on to win another Super Bowl the following year, it took me nearly three decades to return. So much for it being "easy."

By the time I did reach my next Super Bowl, it had become so much bigger. All of us knew it was going to be quite an extravaganza but also knew that our job was to win the game. So I called some coaches who had been there—Bill Cowher, Andy Reid, Mike Holmgren—and talked to them about how they prepared their teams. Each of them told me to do as much work as possible in Indianapolis and to let the players experience the week in Miami.

Our Colts team was fortunate to have several players who had already been to the Super Bowl: Booger MacFarland, Adam Vinatieri, Dan Klecko, and Ricky Proehl. Ricky was phenomenal speaking to our guys about how the winners get treated as opposed to the losers; he'd won with the Rams, lost with Carolina.

It was also special being there with Bears head coach Lovie Smith—the fact that Lovie started with me in the NFL, coaching the linebackers when I was the head coach at Tampa Bay, and us being the first two African-American head coaches in the Super Bowl. We both looked at it as a win-win situation, and I'd feel that way no matter who won the game.

Fast-forward five more years to today. I've retired from coaching, but feel every bit as part of this Super Bowl since it's being played in Indianapolis. And just as reaching the Super Bowl is the culmination of a lot of hard work, so is hosting one.

When the local Host Committee was first bidding on the game, I became involved with the campaign. I knew the economic impact it would have for the city and how much Colts owner Jim Irsay wanted it here. Truthfully, I was more nervous at our bidding presentation (for Super Bowl XLV, which was ultimately awarded to Dallas) than I was either playing or coaching in the Super Bowl.

I saw how heartbroken our people were when we didn't get the game and wondered, "Can we put in this kind of effort again?" But NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell urged us to do it, and when we were awarded Super Bowl XLVI, it was such a relief.

Now when I come back and see the new hotels and infrastructure around the city and near the stadium—and the excitement everyone here has for the Super Bowl—it's very special because I want fans to experience our city at its best.

Knowing the amazing spirit of Indianapolis and its people, I have no doubt they will.

Tony Dungy had the rare opportunity to win a Super Bowl as a player and a head coach, and was the first African-American coach to win an NFL title. Since retiring in 2009, he has worked as a mentor to NFL players, as a community activist with the Tampa-based Abe Brown Ministries, and with his own charities: Dungy Family Foundation and All-Pro Dad.

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